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A *Dan Wheeler* story by the author of "The Crook and the Doctor," "The Open Night," etc. For tense excitement and breath-stopping action this story will stand up against any other ever written. *Dan*, or "*Sled*," *Wheeler* is what might be termed a king-crook, holding his kingship by the terrific force of his personality and his readiness to turn it into instant and stupefying action. Loved by his friends, but a nightmare to his enemies. Back of him is a mysterious secret order numbering among its members men from all walks of life. There is said to be such an order. Read a few pages of this story and you can not stop.

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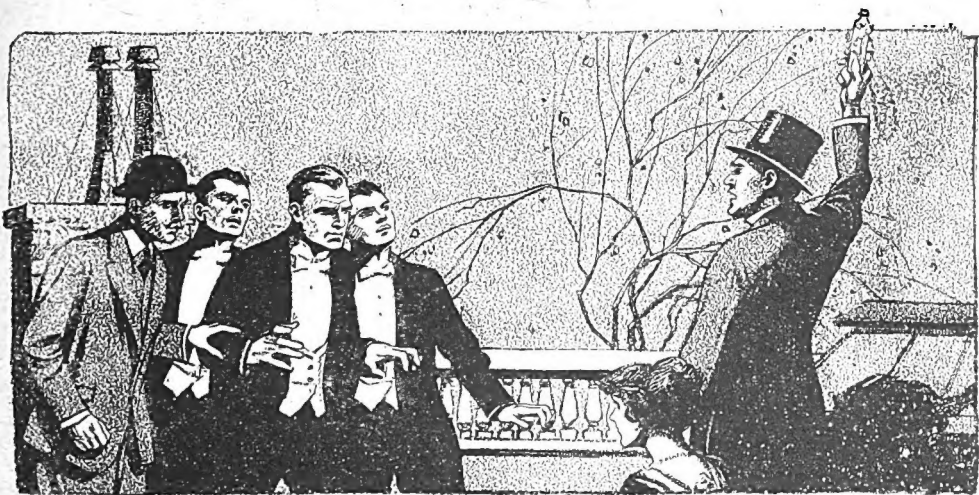
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A Drop of Doom

By John I. Cochrane M.D.

CHAPTER I

THE SHADOW OF SLED WHEELER

THREE weeks had passed since the Open Night, the night of the big poker game and of the breaking of Jim Searing, when Dan ("Sled") Wheeler had won from Searing all he had—cash, roulette wheels, furniture and good will—and afterward had "broke" Searing's splendid body with his bare hands.

Wheeler's term in the penitentiary on Blackwell's Island had ended that same day. Within two days he had sold the gambling-establishment, disappeared from New York, and not a word had I heard from him in the following three weeks.

Dull weeks these had been for me, James

Corbin, the young pen. physician, and for all the inmates of the pen. hospital, by reason of the absence from the ward of this same great crook and gambler, Sled Wheeler. Even the lesser crooks, convalescents, who had cringed, whispered and dodged while Dan paced the long ward with his tiger stride—who feared him as they never feared the devil—drooped, moped and became surly. And this got on the nerves of even the ex-leading-man and matinee idol, Radburn, railroaded to prison and now wearing stripes as my trusty first orderly.

"'Pon me soul, I believe the bloomin' mokes *like* to be bullied!" exploded Radburn, handsome head back-thrown, with a haughty English glare through his nose glasses. Now that Dan was gone, he wanted to be the terror of the ward himself. So

far, however, the crooks had failed to dodge and cringe from him as he desired; therefore, being a great actor, with an inalienable right to all the limelight, he was envious and sore. He went on with disgust—

"And now Dan's not here to bully them, they drag around, lookin' like a lot of bleeding—undertakers!"

"Yow!" yelped the Professor, my fat Falstaffian drug orderly, mixing doses at the drug cabinet just outside the office door. "Rotten, Rad, rotten! That was a flivver—a rank anticlimax. 'Undertakers,' forsooth! And you call yourself an actor! I'll tell you what's wrong with you—you been understudying Wheeler, and you *can't get it over*. You're a sorehead; isn't that right, doctor?"

His clear, fat-man's eyes twinkled over his spectacles at us with keen good nature. He was our sunshine, never clouded, and a puzzle. Though a convict, he had the features, speech, and tact of a thoroughbred, the principles of a weasel and the courage of a chicken. This last attribute the actor knew full well, by sympathy.

"Yah, you big stuff!" he blustered. "You shut your yap! *You sang* mighty small as long as Wheeler was here—if he flicked an eyelash your way—you backed into your shell, like a bleeding terrapin!"

"*Now she's rolling!*" cried the Professor. "Your similes are on the upgrade. Sick 'em, Towzer!"

"If it comes to that," said I mildly, "I didn't notice any of us hunting trouble with Dan—not so you'd notice it!"

"That's right enough," Radburn agreed unsuspiciously. "It would have been suicide to cross his path when he was in one of his—*Now* what are *you* throwing fits over, you big fat slob?" He made a sudden rush at the Professor, who was slapping his thighs and rocking in pantomime enjoyment at my thrust.

"Watch out!" The Professor held up between them a graduate of liquid. "This is a powerful acid—been known to exterminate whole families!"

"And don't you boys wake up Haupt," I added, "with your kid squabbles; he was up all night with those neuralgia fakers on the 'Fourth Tier, Old,' so that I could sleep. Now he needs the sleep himself."

"Some day I'll crack that solid ivory block of yours, my man!" Radburn shook at the fat man a fist beautifully manicured,

but made up in form to cause only derision in a real fighter.

"Well—I got to grind some more Anatomy for those Government exams," I hinted, reaching for my book; and Radburn meekly withdrew to the opposite corner of the ward, where he settled himself with a morning *World* in Wheeler's old chair by the stair head.

I did not at once get my mind focused on the "Gray's Anatomy" before me. I could see that the handsome burly matinée idol was still sore within. It rasped his leading-man's vanity to the raw to feel how ineffectual was his own magnetic personality as compared to Wheeler's.

I knew he was thinking that even the lingering memory of Dan Wheeler had more punch, with these convicts, than his own beefy bodily presence. His most savage visage and deepest chest tones aroused only grins, while the crooks in hospital still shivered at the bare thought of "Sled" Wheeler's tawny narrowed eyes. It was up to him—E. Booth Radburn—to prove that he was some dangerous person himself. I watched to see what he was going to do about it, if anything.



ENTER, from down the ward, Walsh, my head nurse or First Orderly. Walsh was a slow, plodding, but conscientious worker, with a sad, pale face and pathetic eyes of angel blue. His large, thin-lipped mouth drooped dolefully at the corners, through which he spoke Bowery with slow, hoarse emphasis. At present, in the slack hour of afternoon, believing I had gone into the women's ward, Walsh was tired and in search of well earned rest and a look at the papers.

"Seen my *Woild* anyw'eres around here?" he hoarsely whispered sideways at the Professor as he shuffled the papers in the deep window seat.

The Professor looked up with a twinkle and jerked his head toward the actor in the corner. After a slow, sad look, Walsh whispered a harsh "All right," picked up a day-old sheet, and patiently started back down the ward.

But as he passed the actor that gentleman flopped his paper into his lap and unmasked a battery of gleaming nose glasses and savage frown. Walsh, still unconscious of this flank fire, trudged wearily on. The actor called—

"Your *World!*" He couldn't think of any other bone of contention. "D'you mean to say you take a paper? Can you read?" he roared in horrible chest tones.

Walsh turned on him a look of doleful reproach, with the husky whisper: "Ah—h! What's eatin' youse? Dat stage stuff don't go wit' me, see? Go tell yerself funny stories!"

Plain *lèse majesté!* Rising to his full six feet, the burly Englishman bore down on the thin consumptive orderly, removing his eye glasses and shaking them on a threatening thumb as he boomed with much mouth action:

"You—you bloomin' mucker! You blahsted bleeding cheap crook! D'you knaow who you are talkin' to?" The nose glasses were in Walsh's face now. "For sixpence I'd knock the——"

Walsh sadly knocked him down.

Then most earnestly and conscientiously he proceeded to kick in his ribs and face—or would have done so, very thoroughly, if I had not got him by the collar before the heavy prison brogans had landed more than once apiece. It was not beastly cruelty nor passion—merely a measure of precaution indicated by experience. He had learned, pitifully well, that if you didn't do your man right when you had him down, he would presently get up and do you dirt—and then some.

As it was the actor was dead to the world; his classic, so-admired features more or less mussed up, and his scalp split to the extent of four stitches. Walsh, immediately repentant, helped me so deftly that we had the bridge of his nose reëlevated and his head sewed up before our patient opened his eyes to inquire blankly how many were killed, and if the women were all got out.

Since he was wobbly from loss of blood, I put him to bed, and was sitting alone in the little office, meditating the folly of earthly ambitions. "Say, doc—c'n I come in?" hoarsed Walsh submissively in the doorway.

"Sure. Sit down."

"T'anks. I don't need no chair." Hands clenched, he went at it head down. "Doc, I ain't raisin' no roar. I get de dark cell, an' it's comin' t' me. But I want youse to know I'm dead sore on meself fer queerin' de service!"

"You were not to blame; no dark cell this trip," said I shortly. "I can't bother

to break in a new head nurse now. Just pass the word to keep it dark and I'll square it with the Dep."

There was doglike devotion in his pale blue eyes, intent but doubtful. "Yeh? But, doc! Some o' dem screws* has been makin' a crack about youse. 'He's easy,' dey says. 'On'y fer Wheeler backin' 'im up he's no good,' dey says. 'Wait till Dan goes, an' dem crooks'll stan' 'is pet doctor on 'is nut,' dey says. Now dey got a chancet t' raise a holler. Dat's why de fellehs is sore on me fer gummin' yer game. Better gimme a stretch in de dark, doc!"

Now dark cell is no joke—pitch dark in a stone box with a bucket, a blanket, a cup of water and a chunk of bread on the stone floor—by yourself! So I was very crisp and stiff about it.

"Just tell the boys to keep shut—tight. Let the screws holler. Is that all?"

Walsh blinked, swallowed, and a red spot appeared on his cheek bones as he became still more hoarse and worried.

"Doc, I'd hate fer Dan to hear I went back on youse; he got me de graft up here. I'd sooner do another bit dan go out wit' Dan sore on me."

"Don't worry. You have made good, and I'll see that Dan gets it straight."

"T'anks, doctor!" The innocent blue eyes were moist. "I'd sooner have Dan me friend dan de boss of de whole woiks. Dat's right—even if de main guy is sore on 'im."

In the doorway, he stopped to rasp out with emphasis:

"T'anks! An' bet yer last jitney no more rough house goes wit' me on de job—see? Let any gink start somet'ing in dis ward; I jump down his t'roat an' kick 'is heart out!" And Walsh was gone.

I was left to a new realization of the hero worship of the small fry for the famous cracksman. Also I had new evidence that Wheeler's influence with them was not due to political pull. It left the matter rather more of a mystery than ever.

CHAPTER II

A CHAT WITH AUNT MARY

THE next afternoon I took my books to a sunny corner of the women's ward—"Aunt Mary's corner"—where I could study in peace, for the few occupied beds

*"Screws."—keepers.

were at the far end of the ward and Aunt Mary's presence was comfortably soothing.

She sat opposite me in a cushioned rocking-chair, darning a pair of my socks—the plumpest, most motherly old lady with the kindest, keenest blue-gray eyes that ever shone from a fresh-skinned, rosy-cheeked English face.

All the women came to Aunt Mary for advice, and asked to hold her hand when in pain. She was better than a hypodermic of hyoscin to quiet prison hysterics, and—but this is another matter—was known as one of the cleverest diamond thieves in the United Kingdom.

Though Aunt Mary had not spoken for twenty minutes—she could keep her mouth shut better than any woman I ever saw—I couldn't get down to work. My eyes and thoughts would wander to the sleek gray head opposite, then out the window across the river to Manhattan. In both—the head and the city—there were such a lot of things I wanted to know—an awful lot. If I asked her, Aunt Mary would tell me some of them, if she thought they would be good for me.

Anyhow, Aunt Mary was very, very wise. If she gave advice you could lay your last dollar on it. I shut my book.

"How long do you suppose it will be before Dan will show up in the city?"

The clear blue eyes looked up over the gold-bowed spectacles to the closed book, to my face, and returned to the darning.

"This morning's paper 'ad a jewel robbery at Newport." Type will not show her tight-clipped enunciation, or how it held the attention. "And the way the trick was laid out looked like a Lunnon lad—like 'Arry the Toff."

I waited in silence. Aunt Mary spread the sock on her fingers to look for another hole. When she had found and got at it, she went on:

"As a peter man 'e's a tiptopper. 'E's a demon to fight—never been bested; and a flossy card sharp. If 'e comes to New York, I lay odds you see Wheeler in town inside a week."

"But why should Dan feel obliged to lock horns with every blowhard that advertises himself as a bad man? And why is it that somebody seems to be bound to get Wheeler's scalp? He doesn't hunt trouble himself in New York. Why can't they let him alone?"

Aunt Mary gave me a fleeting upward glance.

"Ah! W'y?"

With shining shears she clipped the cotton close to the sock heel, and I knew that was the end of that. Also I knew it would be useless to ask other questions along that line. While I was casting about for an open road Aunt Mary took the bit in her teeth.

"The paper told abaout the Settlement Workers' Ball lahst night, w'ere Miss Joan Cortlandt wore a diamond necklace of hantique pattern, never before seen in New York, worth a 'undred thou'. She'd better put it in safe deposit."

"Because of 'Arry the Toff?" I asked, in an effort to draw her out.

"Aye, of course. Though ev'ry porch climber in town will be on the lookout, and most of the servants not back from Newport to hopen up the town 'ouse." She added casually, "You might mention it to 'er, next time you call."

Aunt Mary never cracked a smile, so I tried to follow up.

"We're not likely to meet. Her people are one of the old families, but in our set we regard it as bad form to have so much vulgar wealth."

"You might meet, at that," said she seriously. "Hi see 'er brother is a 'Arvard man, and you might meet 'im at that college club of yours."

"Hardly. He travels another gait, just like most of the New York members of my class when I was in college. That's why I go to the Harvard Club so seldom—there are only two or three members I ever spoke to in Cambridge, and I don't like to sit in a corner and twirl my thumbs."

"'Ow abaout that smoker you got a bid to? Shahn't you go? Hit's for tonight, you knaow."

"By jing! That's a fact. Too late now, I reckon, and small loss."

"It is not!" She looked up at the clock. "You 'ave just time to get a shave w'ile Joe presses your suit. Hi'd go if I were you; it will beat chewin' the rag with a rheumatic old gun moll, any'ow!"

"I'm not so sure." I got up and stretched. "Pardon me. Now don't forget to take those salicylate tablets tonight—with milk."

"Thank you, sir, I'll not. And good luck!"

CHAPTER III

PARLOR TRICKS—AND A ROUND OF THE
DARK CELLS

THUS it came about that I attended the smoker of the class of Ninety-six at the Harvard Club, where Sam McLeod sat gloomily alone in a corner by the fire.

A big knightly thoroughbred was Sam; big in body, mind and heart. He had everything—birth, breeding and wealth; could do everything that became a man and do it a bit better than the other fellow; so of course he was the center of the best crowd in our class. Yet he was a grimly shy old Spartan. His rich bass was seldom heard outside the glee club; he could give the fellows a good time while he looked on in silence, and only in an emergency did he take the lead.

You may recall the headlines in the papers regarding the Ninety-six class races—how the Ninety-six crew was in the lead when No. 7 broke his oar by sheer strength; how he stood up, balanced the eight-inch shell while he dived between the oars so neatly that the crew never splashed, saved the race at the risk of his life and was picked up unconscious by the referee's launch. Of course that was Sam.

Four years later, here he was alone and unhappy. Wistfully I wished I knew him well enough to go to him—I had not been of his set—when Lorimer bore down on me. Lorimer was a mixer; he could mix others as well as himself. So he was informal floor manager.

"Here, you Corbin!" he demanded. "Come out o' that! Harris tells me you know all about this mysterious Wheeler and a medieval lie he calls 'The Open Night.' Says the paper won't publish it—city editor killed it—but you can swear to it. How about it?" he asked eagerly.

"I was there. Better not get me started on Dan Wheeler."

"Did they play for——" He stopped, shamefaced, with a glance around. "There wasn't any Black Chip. Come!"

"There sure was. But neither man forfeited his life, because Wheeler bluffed Searing out, with every last chip in the pot except the black one. He flipped in his black when all he held was openers; and he had opened at——"

"Mighty Munchausen! Come tell it to the bunch—it'll cheer up Sam!"

"Wait!" I hung back as he pulled at my sleeve. "There's no rush. Tell me first what has happened to Sam."

"Everything—every darn thing!" Lorimer perched on a chair arm and lowered his voice. "After graduation he lost his father—only relative he had—and was left poor. He came to New York, made money in mines, and last week—" he whispered and cast another look around—"he lost it all—or sacrificed it; bought out his partner, Jim Barney, to save Jim from loss. Jim skipped West without a word—not even thank you—and nobody understands it. Here's the joke—Jim is supposed to be engaged to Joan Cortlandt, and I believe Sam's hopelessly in love with her. Get it?"

"Just like the old Indian. Is this Barney person a man?"

"Yep—looks like it. Come, now; do your parlor tricks!"

The meaning of this rapid-whispered summary was sinking into my inner consciousness; and it sank deep, for I knew a man of Sam's caliber could suffer as only the big- and pure-hearted can. Lorimer dragged me to the chimney corner, shouting the old rallying cry:

"Ninety-six this way! All hands to hear a lie for your lives! The fireside's the place for yarns. Oyez! Oyez!"

The prison life and the doings of the great gambler, Sled Wheeler, were new stuff for most of the fellows who had led the sheltered life. Eager questions were soon tumbling over one another from the circle of keen faces that narrowed about me until I forgot myself entirely. Sam McLeod was one of the first to take fire at the tale of Dan's lurid doings, and soon took the rôle of spokesman-questioner by right of the man-power that was in him.

The clock struck eleven in no time at all, and I had to get back to Blackwell's Island in order to make my round of the dark cells before midnight. There was a howl of protest, then a proposal to escort me to the launch in force; but Sam's deep voice growled:

"Some other night, boys. Run along and play! I want that job."

The crowd gave way, on condition that I should continue Dan Wheeler in our next; Sam and I got into our coats and hats and started for the foot of Fifty-second Street. For a time Sam walked in grim silence, and it was I who broke the pause with a

question about the four years' blank since graduation.

He surprised me by letting himself go at once. Life in New York had been lonely for him, lonely as it can be for only a proud and sensitive man in this sordid scramble for gauds and gold. He had known only one real companionship—that of Joan Cortlandt, a multimillionairess in her own right, but a girl "any man would be humbly proud to die or *live* for." She alone had stood between him and complete disgust with New York humanity, and she—

"Is engaged?" I asked. "To your partner, Barney?"

"I don't know." His strong, dark face set and fixed on distance. "I never even mentioned such matters to—her or any one but you. But she and Barney were kids together, and Jim is one square man. Anyhow—" he filled his deep chest—"I've got mine now—got it good; and must start all over, I suppose." He put a hand to his jaw as if in pain.

"Suppose?" Of course you do!" said I. "You have everything—youth, health—everything but money; and that you can get. It's a sure thing!"

"What will stop neuralgia?" he asked suddenly. His face was drawn wryly, and his pupils were large with pain. We had reached Second Avenue; I drew him into the little drug store on the corner.

"It's got to be a knockout," he warned me. "I've tried coal tar in all shapes."

So I gave the little German druggist a prescription for a dozen strong anodyne tablets. While we waited for them the pain left him enough to allow him to talk once more.

"You have all the luck!" He was watching me somberly.

"Sure!" I thought sarcastically of our different paths in college. "It's too bad about you!"

"I mean since college. Look what fun you've had here in New York! I'd give anything for a chance to know your friend Wheeler, and to get into a real sure-enough adventure. In four years I have seen nothing in the city more stirring than a fire or a dog fight, and they always fizzle as soon as I show up." He really was longing for something to take himself outside his own gloomy thoughts.

"You can meet Dan all right, as soon as he comes to town," said I. "Do you want

to go slumming tomorrow night—see some of the crooks' hangouts down town? I can show you one, anyway."

"Do I?" His stern face lightened. "It will save my reason, if it's not asking too much of you. I believe the prospect has cured that neuralgia already—it left me at the mention of Dan; and I have a premonition I'm going to like him."

Here the druggist came out with the tablets.

"Then keep these tablets until next time," said I as I gave them to him. "And don't repeat them beyond the third dose—one at a dose, remember."



I WAS the only passenger on the last trip of the launch, called "the Doctor's launch," but looking like a small tug. On the way across I suddenly recalled that Wheeler had once said he would like to meet Sam McJeed. He had read of Sam's renowned dive at the time of it, and I had told him of some of the fool sophomore doings of our class.

It was a perpetual surprise to see the eager delight with which this man, whose adventures made Munchausen look like a boarding-school miss, would listen to the pointless pranks of a lot of vealy college boys, drunk with the wine of youth. But Dan always had an acute relish for anything fresh and clean, as well as a most catholic sense of humor; and he especially liked the tale of the hackneyed barber-pole episode, well known to every college man. It would be a thing worth doing, just the bringing together of these two stark personalities—also worth seeing.

Mr. Ryan, portly, severe, blue-eyed and blue-coated, let me into the big prison with his usual dignity and grace.

"Good evening, Doctor. Mr. Devery is in charge tonight." He allowed himself to be thus far communicative.

"Nice-day' Devery? Well, well, well! What'll he say now?"

Mr. Ryan almost smiled as he murmured, "Here he comes!" And Devery came in from the tiers, cheery and moon-faced as always, wearing the grin that was born on him. He saluted with a flourish.

"Evening, evening, Doctor. Nice evening; nice evening. Oh-h, yes!" He rattled off his modified formula without pause. "Don't smile, Ryan, if it hurts!" He tossed the latter over his shoulder as the stiff doorman went back to his post.

Mr. Ryan knew better, however, than to sit down to his *Evening World* until Devery was out of sight. He turned a bright scarlet, and there was a shade of malice in Devery's grin that vanished only as he turned to me. Devery had a way with both crooks and screws, and it was getting him promotion.

"How do you like the night trick, Mr. Devery?" I asked respectfully.

"Rotten, thank you, doctor—rotten! But Casey's back tomorrow and the weather will be fine!" he chanted. Then he lowered his voice. "Hear anything from Dan, I dunno?"

"Nary thing. And now, *Mister Devery*, we'll visit the weak-eyed and retire—if you please!"

"My Majesty does not please, an it please you!" said Devery. "I turned Mr. Johnsing loose this evenin'—likewise the other smoke on the third tier. But I hear there's a cullubed lady on the other side has weak eyes, and the whole herd is mill-in'!" Translated from Devery into English this meant that the men in dark cells were released; but that a colored woman had been put in dark cells, and the prison was at loss to account for it.

"Who's on duty in there tonight?" I asked.

"Miss Slattery, yer Grace!" And Devery took off his cap entirely at the name. No wonder; for Miss Slattery was as out of place, as prison matron, as a rose in a tan yard. She was a lovely blonde of the fresh-skinned Madonna type, not nine months out of County Cork; and she had a brother on the Foorce; so we expected to see her soon in a daintier setting. As a matter of fact, she was Mrs. Devery within the year.

The heavy door to the women's corridor had to be opened from the other side, and I have always cherished the belief that it was the picture Miss Slattery made in the frame of the stone doorway—haloed by her yellow hair with the light on it from behind—that landed Devery.

He lost his grin at sight of her—bad sign in an Irishman, in love or war—as he turned his cap around in his hand.

"Miss Slattery, the Doctor wishes to see your tame blackbird."

"Does he so?" Her voice was low and clear, her teeth milk white and even as she smiled slowly. "And what d'ye wish yourself, *Mister Devery*?"

So deliberately rich and soft was her voice and utterance that the door closed on Devery while he still choked on his answer.

"Who is it this time?" I asked, as she led the way with keys and lantern to the door in the granite wall.

"Just Maynard again." She still smiled over her shoulder.

"Booze?"

"Booze it is, but never a drop of it did she touch at all." She stopped at the door. "Maynard was put on the laundry gang; and a man on the new chimney, a brick-layer, is after givin' it her. Mrs. Sullivan took it from her, but Maynard wouldn't tell her nor the Dep which wan give it her. The man has a wife and childher—she told me—and would lose his job he's just afther gettin'. He'd be put in jail. And the wife and childher would starve, so Maynard says not a word will she say."

"Bully for Maynard! Tell her to fake a cough and I'll send her up to hospital," said I, for this was my prerogative. I did not have to give any reason except that the prisoner's health required it, and up to the hospital she would go.

"Sure, and didn't I? But it's no use—it's a mule she is f'r obstinacy!" And again she smiled over her shoulder as she bent to turn the big iron key.

Heavily the great door swung in, and the close dank air of the corridor met us before we stepped into the black vaulted passage. Facing us were four narrow grated doors, and Miss Slattery unlocked the second.

"Here's the doctor to see you, Maynard. Come out, and be a good gyrl."

Blinking even in the lantern light, out stepped a big, wholesome-looking mulatto girl. She had good features and steady eyes, and looked neat, for one shut in pitch darkness.

"How d'you feel, Maynard; any chills or cough?" I asked.

"No-o, s'." Her rich, slow speech had the deep clearness heard nowhere outside her sex and race. And her smile was as ivory-white as the Irish girl's. "No-o, s', Ah ain' had nothin', no-o, s'! Ah'm all raight, s', on'y Ah done tu'n ovvah mah wotah can, an' Ah cert'nly is dry. Ya-ass, s'!"

Miss Slattery picked up the quart can that was filled every twelve hours.

"I'll be after fillin' it myself, if you'll hold the lantern, Doctor."

She was no sooner out of sight than Maynard had plucked from her breast a twisted bit of paper. This she handed to me, and deliberately explained.

"He done tell me give dis to yoh, whah ain' nobody gwine see it—nobody 'tall. Ya-ass, s'! 'S why Ah bin studyin' whah Ah gwine git a chancet toe do it—ya-ass, s'. Twel dis evenin' Ah done upshot mah wotah can!" And her broad sweep of ivories was prideful.

"Fine!" said I. "Where did you come from, Maynard, and how did you get in here? Is this your first bit?"

"Ya-ass, s'. Come f'um N'Yollens, ya-ass, s'! Ah been hyeh less'n a yeah. Ah was rubberin' in a sto', an' a woman done steal some ribbons—she see dey gwine ketch 'er, an' she done shove 'em off on me. 'Foh Ah got sense enough to drap 'em dey done pinch me, and de Jedge done gimme six months—ya-ass, s'."

And this time her broad smile was an admission that the joke was on her.

"Now you've done your errand, you can manage a cough, can't you?"

"Ya-ass, s'. Ah reckon Ah's gwine be mighty ba-ad tomoh' mawnin'." She put one hand on her deep bosom and produced a cough that rumbled up from the lowermost base of her subconsciousness.

"Here!" said Miss Slattery, coming up with the water. "Drink this quick!"

The result was a strangling-spell to melt a heart of flint.

"Awful cough this woman has, Miss Slattery. Send her right up."

"We will that. Come, Maynard—you're a sick woman."

"Ya-assm! Reckon Ah got two-buckle-osis mighty ba-ad!"

Maynard followed, smiling and strangling tearfully. In ten minutes she was in a clean bed in the hospital, being spoiled by the night orderlies; and I was in my little bedroom over the entrance hall, untwisting the scrap of brown paper which she had given me. It was a sharp disappointment to find the writing was not in Wheeler's neat, even hand. Yet I might have known he would not send written word, even by a negress who could not read, for a keen lookout was being kept for him by the powers of the new régime. The penciled words

9—10 A. M. Man on laundry flue.

were all the marks on the crumpled paper.

Possibly the man repairing the laundry flue might have a message from Dan. Dan would never do any cheap detective melodrama in the disguise of a bricklayer, but who else would be getting word to me in such a roundabout way?

If only Dan would show up right now, when Sam McLeod was in trouble, I felt sure he could do something about it; and I very much wanted to bring these two men together, anyhow. There would be sure to be happenings as the outcome of such a meeting. I could find a hundred and two reasons why I wanted to see Wheeler, but the best one was because I wanted to see him.

CHAPTER IV

SLED WHEELER HIMSELF

IN THE months I had lived on the Island I had never visited the perpetual building-job that was adding to the New Prison, or North Wing of the Penitentiary, and furnishing steady employment to the convicts.

At nine o'clock the next morning I was being shown over the whole works by a keeper, for I was trying to be as careful as the sender of the message, and not to arouse suspicion. But all the time I was in a quiver of impatience to get to the laundry flue, wherever it was. When at last I was free to go to the laundry, the matron in charge directed me to the heating-plant, where I saw a man on a staging laying a chimney.

Sauntering almost under the staging—it was head high—I looked up at a solid-looking man and said—

"Man on the laundry flue?"

"M-hm!" He turned to eject a cupful of tobacco juice to leeward. "You the doctor?"

"Yes."

"Go 'round the corner and you'll see three men laying brick on the side wall. Take a good long look at the little redhead—he's a Central Office dick. Then go 'round the next corner with *both* hands in your pockets. Go slow and look at the river. He's around there alone, workin' on the other end wall."

And the man never skipped in his stride nor looked at me again. I obeyed orders to the letter. The detective fidgeted under

my innocent gaze and squarely turned his back. Then I strolled around the corner.

A round-shouldered bricklayer with a bronzed face and a week's growth of grizzly beard, wearing smoked goggles and a sandy wig, was working alone on the low wall. He carefully buttered a brick, *tap-tapped* it into place, straightened the hump out of his back and pushed up the goggles as he swung on me the startling glint of a pair of long-slit green eyes—Dan Wheeler!

Have patience with an attempt to show what this man looked like—this man who was more feared by more men, would do more for a friend and more to an enemy, had toyed with death in more forms than any living man.

Larger than the average, but light-appearing; at near fifty built like a youth of twenty—I've seen him leap two hospital beds, standing, like a leopard; it was his face that gave you a shock as you met his long, green eyes. All his features were boldly clean-cut, chin deep-cleft and square, while the mouth, thin-lipped and mercilessly powerful, was mobile with grim humor and a sensitiveness that goes only with genius—and Celtic genius at that.

But those eyes—dilating and deepening from tawny yellow to amber-brown and black—they had a steady, peculiar drawing-power; they could make you shiver or glow, or feel numb and wooden.

But to warm to the man, feel the leaping delight I felt at sight of him, you had to have been in the same tight place with him, have him fighting back to back with you, as I had. You could not *know* him—no man I knew less—but at sight of him the sun shone brighter, and life was a glorious chance. Yet he never laughed—seldom smiled— But we quit, right here!

"Well, doc!" he said crisply. "Didn't look for me in dime-novel disgeeze—what? That's why I'm in it."

Removing a pair of thick gloves, he worked those wonderful hands whose smooth-flashing grace always fascinated me while I shuddered to think what they had done. He did not offer to shake, but in his slightly hoarse tones there was warm welcome. "How d'you like my toupee, doc? Remember Bob's curl papers, in the first act?"

Cap off, he slowly turned his bewigged head and filliped his fingers about it, in quizzical imitation of Jefferson in that delicious scene of "The Rivals."

"You'd scare a dray horse!" I admitted. "What you got on your face? Even your voice is out of whack. Gee, but I'm glad to see you, Dan!"

"Beauty's a matter of taste, son!" He slowly flushed with a pleasure he scorned to speak. "Not even skin deep—stain on face and no razor. As to my voice—buttons! Pooh! Pooh!" He turned aside to dislodge from his cheeks and blow out two bone overcoat buttons. "But I've had a plenty of this act—laying bricks is stiffening business, and four days is enough."

"Can you lay bricks, Dan? And if so, why?"

"Lay bricks? Who? Me? H'm! Watch!" Slipping on the gloves, he caught up brick and trowel, twirled them in the air, cuffed them to a reverse twirl, caught them with a sharp click, and for a half minute buttered bricks slid into place with a sure swiftness that made his movements hard to follow. Tossing the trowel aside, he turned to me with a serious change in his manner as he talked.

"Pretty fair! Fair mason, better carpenter, but locks—— Say, doc, some day I'll show you a stunt with locks. It all comes handy, like juggling and jiu-jitsu—so much for *why*! Now come down to tacks!"

He stepped to the corner and cautiously peeped around it; then stepped back again to tell me.

"The carrot-topped gink from the Central Office has got something, and he's afraid it's a hunch. Saunter out where he can see you and look at the view of the river." I obeyed promptly, and Dan went on: "That's good. Hold that, and listen. This was the only place they weren't watching for me, and so I came here to get a word with you. But the red-headed dick came on today, so you didn't come a minute too soon—— Hear me all right?"

"Yes. Shoot it!"

"Well, the Gang—what's left of the Darcy Gang and its heirs, are strong with the new Boss of the Ring. They are as sore on me as ever, and what's more, they're scared—see? They know I have got it on 'em and could send 'em up the river; and a scared crook is worse'n a rattler. Heard anything of an English Johnny called 'Arry the Toff?"

"Yes. From Aunt Mary." I addressed the East River.

"Yeh? Now this 'Arry person has put

away some of the worst of 'em on the other side; and the Gang, with Cameron at the head, have imported this crook to get me. See?"

"Get you! How do you mean? Beat you at your game? Humiliate——"

"Oh-h, no!" he interrupted, and his drawl had a razor edge. "Nothing so harsh as that! They want him to challenge me to play tiddledywinks for the soda water. Smoke up, doc! Don't I tell you they're scared? Lost their nerve? I got 'em buffaloe, and it's 'raus mit old Dan! Him for the morgue! They want me croaked, doc!"

Shaken through, I whirled, saw the tawny flare of his eyes as he snapped:

"'Bout face! You're watched, remember!"

"But—but wh-why——" I stammered as I obeyed.

"Never mind now. Here's the point—this 'Arry is no piker, and he knows he's got 'em good. He has named a price for the job that's too strong, even for that bunch. It hurts them to dig up, so they say they can't come across——"

"Then it's all off?"

"Sh-h! Not so loud! Not so you'd notice it! They make a deal with him. He's got to have his, so they agree to square the Central Office and the bulls, and let him pull off a couple of big tricks uptown—one before and the other after he delivers the goods. That's how he gets his pay, see?"

"I think so," I repeated nervously. "He is to be allowed to burgle two houses in the swell part of the city, if he—if he puts you out of the way for good. But, Dan——"

"You got it! Freeze to it! Now, doc—we got to beat 'em to it!"

"We? Am I in this?"



"EASY, doc! He'll hear you. Sure you're in it, and a fat part! Now we got to use brains——Hark!" He now spoke with a slow precision and purity of English that meant tense concentration. "We want to hit first and hardest. Now they don't know where I am, but you are being shadowed all the time—that's what the redhead was sent here for. So far we've fooled them, but it can't last long. I may give 'Arry a jolt any time now, just to set him thinking, and what I want of you is this—go down to Tom's place tomorrow night, and take a good man with you—a

husky chap with a close mouth. Know one?"

"McLeod?"

"Lad that jumped out of the boat?" Wheeler never forgot anything. He responded instantly at mention of the name, and approved. "He's all right! Take him, and get a chance to size up this 'Arry. See?"

"How do you mean—physically?"

"No. I know he's an athlete, but I've got it on him with this Jap game—jiu-jitsu. I was working at it when he was in short skirts. What I want is the mental make-up of the man." Dan was talking like a book now; he was most scary when he talked like a college professor. "Can he hang to a fact like a bulldog and back it to the limit, or can he be bluffed and muddled up? Has he any rules to play by, or is it any way to win? Got that?"

"Yes. You want to know if he has nerve and character. Is that all?"

"One other thing. I may have to use you, may have to fool you at some stage of the game, as I did when I was on Searling's trail. But you know me—what?"

"I know you'd never give me any the worst of it, if that's what you mean."

"Good boy! Now turn your back to me, square—look straight at the redhead dick, and tell it to me."

I turned so I could not see him, repeated my lesson carefully, and added:

"The detective is taking off his overalls and jumper. Reckon he's coming to pay us a call?"

No answer. No sound but the hoarse whistle of the old *Monadnock*, which had landed her odds and ends of humanity at the Hospital Landing, and was casting off to swing out into the river. I turned my head.

No Wheeler was in sight. The trowel lay on the wall, and beside it the clumsy gloves, keeping the shape of a pair of wonderful hands.

The door of the old wash house was just beyond the end of the wall, and from the far end of the wash house it was possible to go back of the New Prison and reach the Hospital Landing unseen. I waited until the *Monadnock* came steaming up against the tide to make the Almshouse Landing; and against the black background of an open port near the water line a hand waved once.

It was almost time for sick line, so I started back to the Penitentiary, and looked back once before I rounded the North Wing. The auburn-haired man was standing just where I had stood, staring at the gloves and trowel on the wall. He looked paralyzed. He was looking for a messenger from Dan, and had no suspicion that Wheeler himself had been within a stone's throw for three days.

CHAPTER V

THE MORTON HOUSE "JOKE"

"SEE here, doc!" blared Deputy Warden Murphy, coming out of his office as I entered the hall. "Who's running this prison? What d'y'e mean by ordering that woman out o' dark cell just as soon as I put her in?"

The striped clerks tried not to look as if their ears were growing. I faced the fierce eyes glaring at me through spectacles.

"You didn't want the woman to die of pneumonia, did you, Mr. Murphy?"

"Has she got it—a sign of it?" he shouted savagely.

"Well," I drawled softly, "no—but she coughed."

"Doc, you're all right, all right!" Slipping his arm through mine, he drew me with him toward the corridor as he went on in a low tone. "She's got stuff in her, that woman! I was stuck on her spunk, and I put her in for discipline—I was going to tell you this morning to send her up to Hospital, and found you'd beat me to it. Where you been? Heard from old Dan?"

"Sure. Just found him laying bricks on the new laundry," said I.

"I got a photo of Dan laying bricks," the Dep laughed, "with those precious manicured hands of his. He'd hold a job, I don't think! The first time the foreman gave him a call-down—zing! Foreman wanted!"

I knew he wouldn't believe the truth, and was patting my own clever back inwardly, but the next moment I felt conscience twinges for deceiving so good a friend of Wheeler's; for the Dep drew me aside from the waiting knot of keepers in the corridor.

"But, doc, first chance you get, tell Dan to keep an eye peeled for Cameron and his crowd. They're framing something, and he'd better lie low. See?"

"Thanks. But—" I cast a look about—"he's next; don't worry!"

"I should worry about Dan!" the Dep jeered. "Some of those lollops have got a surprise coming to them—they got a notion Dan is ready for the can, but wait; And lemme tell you, doc—you got one friend there worth having, in that same Sled Wheeler!"

"I know that—I ought to know it by now," I answered fervently.

"Ever hear how Dan came to kick in with Porter, the King of peter men?" The Dep looked at his watch, and found there were three minutes to sick-line time for which we were waiting.

"It was in the old days when Dan was young at the game. He was in green goods—it was a good grift in New York then—and was just coming to be known for—well, for what he is. But Porter was the biggest gun of them all—a slick peter man and a demon to stir up; a heavy swell any man was proud to be seen with. Both of them had 'seen' the Front Office and were 'good' in New York; they were working the other towns and had come to Broadway for a large time with their rolls.

"Their friends steered them together at the old Morton House. Some of the boys were ragging Dan for letting a hick frisk his roll, and Porter had to hear the story all over again. Seems Dan had sold an old hayseed the regular three hundred dollars' worth—shown him the good bills and shifted on to him packs of 'tops and bottoms' that the fly cop had nabbed off him at the station waiting-room.

"Well—when the old Rube finds he's nicked, he hunts up Dan and weeps on his shirt front—tells him how many years he's worked to pay off the mortgage on his farm, and never wronged a man in his life; but the old woman is worried to death about the foreclosure, and he'd bit at Dan's circular ad. just because the man holding the mortgage is a tightwad with a grudge ag'in' him.

"Six hundred would have paid it off, but now the old hick's got to go home and tell the old lady that the farm must go—that he's tried to cheat and been beaten by a slicker crook than himself. Well—Dan hears the story through, coughs up six hundred in good money, and tells the old redneck to go back to the old woman, and to send him the canceled mortgage to—

frame and look at. That's Dan, any time! "Porter joins in with the rest to stir Dan up—tells him he's dead easy for any sob artist, and everybody knows him as an easy mark.

"I heard it as soon as I struck the Pike!" says Porter. "I'm some Denman Thompson myself, so I made up as a Down-East mossback and worked you for the six hun'. Don't you recognize me? I was the State-o'-Maine man myself!" He laughs too much, and slaps Dan on the back—Dan never would stand for that.

"I believe you were," says Dan, and those big cat eyes of his begin to flicker in the way that makes you dizzy. But Porter is looking at the boys and winking—he'd poke up a grizzly anyhow, to hear him growl.

"Sure I was! Just told the boys about it as we came in, didn't I?" He winks and laughs some more. The boys say yes, and Porter slaps Dan's back again. That settles it.

"Then come across!" snaps Dan, and waves his gat. "Keep out of this, everybody, unless you want to get drilled! You have had your six hun' worth of fun, Porter; I want my money and I want it now!"

"And he holds him to it—won't listen to fireworks, either; sticks Porter up right in the Morton House bar room and makes him peel his roll of six hundred—makes him hand it over real polite, too!"

"Porter always was hard to jar loose from the coin, but the nerve of it gets next him. At last he comes good.

"Kid, you're the real goods." He raises his paw—

"No more carpet-beating in this!" Dan sticks in. "My back's raw now!"

"You're the man I'm looking for to go to Europe with me," says Porter. "I will make a world-beater of you!"

"You know the rest," said the Dep; "how Dan got to be a world-beater, not only at safe-opening but in all departments of the game. But he always cared more for the fun of winning, or putting a fancy finish on the job, than for the money in it. Now Porter was that way, too."

The Dep was on his hobby and in full speed. He continued:

"But with Porter it was a case of Big-I-and-little-U. He'd got to be the big noise or he was sore. They say it was for the big stake he tried to kill Dan when Dan

croaked him in the basement vault of that London bank. It was a big haul, but I always stuck to it that it was jealousy—Dan was getting to be the better man at any game, and that was what stuck in Porter's crop.

"Did Dan ever tell you about the fight in the bank vault? It must have been something fierce—I'm glad I didn't see it. Think of those two—mm-mm-mm!"

"It was," said I. "Dan told me about it—I don't care to tell about it, or *think* about it! But I can confirm your guess, partly. It *was* jealousy. And the grudge Porter had always carried, because of the 'Morton House joke'—that was what Dan called it, but he never told me the story—must be the one you have just told."

"Sure! That was Dan all over—you can't get him to grandstand nor brag. Tell me, doc—how did that fight wind up? I never could get Dan to tell me."

In his eagerness the Dep even failed to hear the bell ring for lunch and sick line.

"Neither man had a weapon. Porter had Dan's throat in his bear-paw grip and a thumb in his eye socket; Dan got his hand on a bar of bullion—just in time! Those were his last words," said I.

"Gad!" The Dep shook his head quickly, with a grinning grimace of sympathetic excitement at the mental picture of the fatal scene. "*Hot* gruel, doc—*hot* gruel!" Then as we separated he called: "My regards to the Old Panther, when you see him!"

Already the sick line was forming along the outer wall. The gangs were shuffling in in lockstep, each gang a striped centipede, and the Professor stood by my desk with his drug box and graduates, tin cup and pail of water. I took my place, to hear assorted tales of woe and misery, and to try to separate the true from the fakes, the sick men from the malingerers.

CHAPTER VI

A SLANT ON 'ARRY THE TOFF

AFTER two o'clock there was nothing for me to do that day but kill time until I should go to Sam McLeod's room at six. He had sent a note by messenger to come early, so that we might go out to dinner and see a show or something before starting for Crooktown. I could not get

my mind on a book, so I tried to get some advance information from Aunt Mary.

She was busy with her hands, of course, knitting some white feminine fussiness. I thought I looked bored as I asked without introduction—

"This 'Arry person—what's his real name?"

"'Enery 'Ooper. 'Is father was a shop-keeper or somethink, I believe, but 'e 'ad 'Arry heducated like a gentleman. That's 'ow 'Arry comes to be such a wizzard with hexplosives. And 'e talks like a real toff, w'en he's not hexcited."

It occurred to me that Aunt Mary's reckless handling of aspirates showed her mind was on something besides her speech.

"Explosives?" I prompted slyly, not to turn her from the trail.

"Aye. 'E 'as a soup all 'is own; and 'e used to hopen 'is boxes in no time, until 'e got to be a combination expert. They s'y 'e still carries it with 'im w'en 'e works, an' it's somethin' tremenjous—ten times stronger'n ordn'ry soup."

"What's he like?" A sharp look over her spectacles made me explain: "What does he look like? How's his nerve and his courage?"

"He's careful!" (I supply letters to make Aunt Mary more legible.) "And he lays out his jobs to the Queen's taste, pays the servants well and the bobby on the beat. He works all sole alone—no outside man; and he's a tiptopper at it.

"But he don't know what fear is. He's a demon if hinterrupted, and will take desperate chahnces on a getaway rather than get lagged. He has killed his half dozen, always in getting off with the swag; he cert'nly is one bad man to stop w'en once 'e's got 'is 'ands on the swag!"

Either I was getting frightened for Dan, or I was thinking she used the crook's patter of a bygone generation, for I murmured absently:

"Yes. So I hear."

"Aye—and 'oo told you?"

She snapped me up with a keen look.

"Who told—I—why, you did! You said so before, don't you remember? I am afraid you are showing more signs of age than rheumatic joints, Aunt Mary!"

"Aye, lad. 'Appen Ah be!" Aunt Mary's Yorkshire, too broad for spelling, showed I had landed. "But none so old but Ah c'n see th' art all of a twitter laike since

this noontime!" She returned to her knitting and more common talk, to give me placidly a short-arm jab. "If I was to guess, I'd say you had seen Dan Wheeler."

"You—I—why?" I bleated. "What if I did?"

"Nothing, lad—only don't try to be so sly-like; we're all friends of Dan here. And it's going the round of the prison telegraph that Dan's in the city. They say it's a bad crowd that's after him, and the crooks are all on Dan's side."

She deliberately swept a look around the ward for listeners.

"Now, what d'you want to know about 'Arry? I only know what I hear, but I will tell what I know."

"What's his weak point—and can he be depended on to play fair or keep his word?"

"I never 'eard of a weak point, unless it's superstition—he believes he has seen ghosts. And for his word—you can't depend on him to do anything but get money and hold to it. 'E's balmy for gold or jewels, an' 'e'd kill 'is best pal for money enough. You tell Dan Wheeler 'e will need all 'e's got—brains and clever tricks—to get 'Arry the Toff! That's what I've been worryin' abaout all afternoon—I'm sorry Dan's goin' to meet 'im, for I like Dan Wheeler."

"Shake on that, Aunt Mary. And don't worry—Dan has been up against a lot of bad men."

"Aye! So 'as 'Arry—the worst of the Hapaches, an' all. I fancy you're right, doctor. W'en a woman gets old, she gets foolish and worrisome, like."

She brushed her eyes, and I felt a choke in my throat as I saw a drop sparkle down on her knitting. I had no words for the occasion, and presently she got her spectacles wiped and in place. Then she said:

"Of course, Dan is a man, a right man, w'ile 'Arry is an appetite for money. An' that's just w'at worries me—this 'Arry 'as brains enough to get 'is chahnce, an' 'e would shoot Dan in the back like winkin', or blow 'im hup with a hinferral machine of some sort!" She swallowed hard and said no more.

"Thank you, Aunt Mary. Forewarned is forearmed, you know—and I'll tell Dan what you say." I got up, for I could sit inactive no longer.

"Don't tell 'im I sent 'im hadvice!" said Aunt Mary. "'E'd be sure I was jolly well

'balmy!' Then she added, "And thank you, sir!"

As I made preparations to go to town I was thinking of a saying of Dan's, "No man's dead broke as long as he's got a friend." That surely was true of friends like him or his. I knew how devoted were all the small crooks—even the lowest, whom he despised with a savage contempt—to this many-sided man of strife. But I had no notion Aunt Mary would side against her fellow-Britisher because of feeling for Dan. I was glad to be surprised, and to get her information, but if I had any growing-pains as a budding detective genius they were cured by my last interview.

CHAPTER VII

A CALL FROM JACK CORTLANDT

MCLEOD'S address was in the West Fifties, but it was not until I walked down the street in the Autumn dusk that I realized that his rooms were only a few numbers beyond the very gambling-place where the big poker game had been played on the Open Night. Wheeler had sold out within forty-eight hours of winning the whole plant from Searing, and since then I had not been inside the fortified house. I looked up at its closed shutters—daylight never entered those windows—and they seemed to mock me, in a long malicious wink, sarcastically meek.

Sam's number I found to be a rather richly appointed apartment house, where you pushed the button under the proper name and the ghostly door clicked open. It was no surprise to find him in such quarters; McLeod was the outcome of generations of culture and affluence, and his late reverses I assumed to mean only the loss of surplus income. I climbed two flights, to find him on the landing with outstretched hand.

"It's mighty good of you, Corbin. I don't know why you have taken pity on a failure, but I take the gifts of the gods and ask no questions."

His darkly handsome face looked rather tired and grim, but there was real pleasure and welcome in it as he led me into a home-like library, and to an open fire. Meanwhile he was talking with a mingling of courtliness and informality all his own.

"You have fixed it so you can spend the

night here? Good! And you really don't mind my making use of you to amuse me? I am no fit companion for anybody; but you may feel the satisfaction of doing a Christian act, whatever your motives."

"Good orthodox pragmatism. And I'm hungry—never analyze motives on an empty stomach."

"That," said Sam, drawing up a big Morris chair, "is a perfectly good epigram. You 'made ut.' D'you know, you remind me of Mulvaney. If you will look at the magazines a minute, I'll get into a coat and we'll hunt up something to fill that stomach."

He left the doors open through a middle room to his bedroom in the rear, where he made the change.

"You 'do yourself jolly well here,'" I called out, as I looked about the tastefully furnished flat.

"Shall not be here after this week," he answered gloomily. I went about on another tack.

"Did you know the gambling-place where the big poker game took place was a few doors up this street—No. 79?"

"No." He appeared at the door tying his scarf. "Does Dan Wheeler still own it?"

"No. It may be a dwelling-house now."

"Now you mention it," he remarked, "I have heard it referred to as a roulette resort. I believe it is called the Art Gallery, from the lot of paintings on the walls. If I had known it was the place you told us——"

His buzzer whizzed, and he crossed the room to the door button.

"Just wait where you are, please. I'll get rid of this person in a second."

But he swung the door to the middle room only half closed. I could see him where he stood waiting, but not the entrance from the hall where the caller would appear.

Steps on the stairs, coming to the door; there they stopped.

"Look here, McLeod!" said a rough, boyish voice. "Are you alone?"

"You may speak out. What is it?" McLeod's voice was deep and quiet.

"Well, it's just this. You—you needn't come to our house any more, or see my sister, until you can explain what they are—saying about you."

I knew the voice now. I had tutored Jack Cortlandt for entrance to "Sheff," but I had never seen his sister, now more famous for her beauty than her millions.

Doubtless, since the death of his father, he felt his own importance as the man of the family.

Sam stood with his deep-set dark eyes fixed on the younger man. His stern Roman profile showed no anger as he said:

"I don't explain as a rule. Are you—may I ask—are you delivering a message, or speaking for yourself?"

"You never mind!" the unsettled voice cracked. "You don't come any more as long as you—as long as this thing is unexplained; that's all!"

Jack was attempting to be as stately and diplomatic as McLeod. Sam's expression did not alter a shade, but I could hear satisfaction in his polished response.

"I shall endeavor not to force myself upon any one who does not want to see me; but I make no pledge. If that really is all, may I wish you a very good evening?"

There was a snort from the door—no other rejoinder but the heavy steps on the stairs and the closing of the door below. Sam went back to his toilet and came out ready for the street; but not until we were in the open air did he ask—

"Know Jack Cortlandt?"

"Tutored him for Yale. He used to be all right—a good fellow inside, with the splinters all on the surface, and handy with the mitts. Grit all through—and when a fellow has good grit there's always something worth while, no matter what he has done." I expounded one article of my creed, and added, "I imagine there's not much resemblance between him and his sister."

"Half sister," corrected Sam. "Not a bit alike, inside or out, except the courage and sound sense. What they are saying, by the way, is that they can't guess where I got the money to buy out my partner's shares in certain mine options and pay all debts of the firm, instead of going through bankruptcy and robbing my creditors. Therefore they infer, of course, that I stole it!" There was bitterness in that last.

"But no friend of yours would listen to that, except as a joke," said I.

"A friend, in that sense, would be hard to find in New York."

"I always coveted that honor," I admitted. "But now I'm tempted to—take it by force, if necessary."

Sam stopped on the corner of the Avenue, and faced me severely.

"Well, I'll be ——! I always stood a bit in awe of you honor men, in college. Will you shake on that?"

We shook, and talk threatened to bog down.

"I want to eat!" I announced. Sam dragged my arm through his.

"Eat it is—with a large, large E! Something special to pour a libation!"

CHAPTER VIII

A LITTLE MIX-UP ON BLANK STREET

AT THE homely old place on Broadway and Twenty-seventh, where the black-walnut chairs had cane seats and the waiters had held their jobs for generations, we ate most nobly.

When you have eaten at such a place there is not much room inside for carking care, and Sam cheered up visibly under the treatment. When the check had come and gone, he announced that he was in my hands and glad of it.

"Where first?" he asked.

"Let's go and get Mac." I had a sudden inspiration.

"By all means. Who's Mac?"

"Why, he's Mac! Medical classmate from Alabam'. We came to New York and roomed together while we hustled hospital jobs. He has shed his old blue sweater, but he still wears a low turn-down collar—last week's vintage—and wolfs two inches of Drummond's Natural Leaf eating-tobacco to the chaw. He says nothing in a deep bass voice, and saws wood, and he's got both staff and nurses at the new Post-clinic eating out of his hand."

"I'd like to meet him."

It had not occurred to me before that the two Macs had points in common. Both spoke rarely, in the same deep voice; both were dark and grim of face. And when I introduced them in the big glistening hospital their eyes met squarely for a silent moment; then both grinned. I explained what was doing.

"Slummin', huh?" said Mac. "Any booze?"

"Mm-mm!" In Birmingham that means no, and Mac understood.

"Where the —— is my hat?" he growled.

I always had to find it for him. Meanwhile he was slipping out of his white duck coat and into the black one with the big

slab of Drummond's in the inside pocket. We were ready to see the sights.

We took in an act at two Bowery theaters, besides the Yiddish, visited a real opium joint, had a cup of marvelous tea with my friend, the great merchant Wing Lee, and got around to Tom's Place about eleven o'clock. Here was where I was to look for 'Arry the Toff.

"I have been looking for something bloody—we haven't seen anything like a scrap," said Sam as we started for the famous resort of crooks.

"We don't want to," I announced with conviction. "Gangsters don't fight for fun, or by any rule except to do the other fellow, and do him dirt. If you see anything start down here, keep out. Me, I shall run the other way; I don't like knives, guns, or even lead pipe wrapped in newspaper—they're not healthy."

"Now you're shoutin'," growled Mac. "But Tom don't stand for rough stuff in his place."

I could see Sam was disappointed. He was in the reaction from depression that brought reckless thirst for action.

Tom had not forgotten me, and he placed us at his special table in the best corner of the big smoky room, telling us to ask for anything we wanted. Most of the tables were occupied by men and women drinking and talking in low, hoarse voices. It was noticeable that for the most part they leaned forward and spoke with tense furtiveness; there was little of relaxation and no real laughter or happiness.

Presently the proprietor was free to sit down with us and point out well known characters, giving their "monakers." Some of these had appeared in the papers, and some I suspect he made up.

It was not ten minutes from the time we had come in when Tom suddenly stopped talking, dropped his head and under his bushy brows stared between us.

"Don't all rubber at once," he growled. "But pipe the new gink in the swagger scenery! He's a greener, or he don't push in here wit' the ton of ice on his chest. His scenery looks like London."

I could hardly keep my eyes ahead. Sam took a casual glance and announced, "Strand—for sure!"

In my turn I caught the Englishman's eye squarely. It was cold, with the fierce glare you see in the eye of a fox; but his

face was frank and square-jawed, and his smile showed even white teeth. Curly black hair cut short showed a broad-based fighting head beneath his hat. A woman had paused at his table to ask him to buy drinks; he shook his head and smiled, still looking at me. The woman sat down next him, openly staring at the diamond scarf pin.

"Some splash he's makin'—him and his sparkler," said Tom, for not an eye in the place had missed the blazing jewel, and there was a whispering silence. "Now Slim's Liz is goin' to have a t'row for it!"

Slim's Liz was a slender girl, with a face, figure and gown that would have blended with Fifth Avenue. She sank haughtily into a chair near the Englishman, and the other woman left with a remark that looked like capital letters.

"Oughtn't somebody to tell him to dim his headlight?" I asked Tom.

"Sure. I don't stand for no friskin' in here, but if he goes down Blank Street pushin' that diamond ahead of him he's lucky if he don't come out feet first." And Tom held up a finger for a waiter, who was just setting down drinks for the new man and Slim's Liz.

"Joe," said the proprietor, "you better tell that lollop to sink the spark in his kick and get above Fourteenth, if he wants to win out."

"Sure! Didn't I tell 'im?" said the waiter huskily. "An' th' best I get is a dry grin an' a nickel. But *lollop*, I don't think! That's the fly crook fr'm London, that's my hunch; an' he's the wise guy—you can't put him next to nothin'! Let 'm go down Blank Street and get croaked, f'r all o' me!"

Several men had slipped furtively from the room, and the Englishman had evidently become suspicious of the charmer at his side. He was looking toward the side entrance that gave on dark Blank Street.

"Well, that lets me out," said Tom. "I ain't got no word to wet-nurse the Johnny. But, by cripes, he's headed for bother!"

"Come on!" Sam got up, his dark eyes glowing. "I like his looks."

"Hold on! This is foolishness," I protested. "I like his looks, but I like my—Tom, tell him it isn't safe!"

"Safe? Safe, is ut?"

Tom's brogue broke loose under excitement.

"Ye'll be fools to butt in. Kape out!"

"I rather like his looks," Sam persisted quietly, buttoning his coat. Mac shook his head at me with a grin that showed all his teeth, spat out his cud and got to his feet to follow Sam. I trailed after, muttering:

"All darn foolishness! Count me out if it comes to a mix-up. I don't want any part of it at all——"

"There he is." Sam pointed as we stepped outside. "And a couple of thugs just sneaked behind that—— Come on, fellows! They're at it!"

And in his shout there was the glad note of battle. He sprinted on his toes.

"Not by a long shot!" I called, but I had to run to make him hear me. "There's more than one knife in that bunch, and you'll be—— There are two more! Come on, or you'll be late!"

For I was a faster sprinter, and had passed him on the way, while I heard Mac hot-footing in the rear.

In a darker spot of the dark street four or five men were 'round the Englishman, who had his back to the wall and was putting up a stiff fight. I saw his heavy stick swing twice, but he was too close to the wall.

"Take the end!" I yelled as I ran. A stick rammed with both hands bayonet-wise is a fearful weapon. "Jab! Jab with the end!"

Charging the dark bunch, my left caught one man under the ear with the full force of my run, and he lost interest. Another, reeling backward from a punch of the Britisher's stick, I snapped half across the narrow street just as Sam whirled into the fray on my side.

More men were boiling out of a half-basement doorway at my right. Just as one dark figure toppled over from Sam's mighty swing, a bigger one popped out of the black door. Mac arrived on the gallop, let loose a second-growth rebel yell, and jumped the big man like a catamount; they went down in a whirl of arms and legs.

Two more men swarmed from the basement; the street seemed full of thugs, and things got thick. Busy with two in front, from my eye-corners I saw a crouching figure with a long bright knife held point up for ripping, sneaking toward Sam and me. I saw the snarl on his livid face.

"Kick the knife man! Kick him in the face!" I gasped between swings (in tight

quarters swings and uppercuts are best). "Kick——"

And then I did it myself.



YOU may think you'd never kick a man in the face, but wait until you are scared. I was scared, and I suppose I lost my nerve; for at that instant one of the two in front stuck a long revolver in my face, and I could almost feel that knife in my stomach. Then somebody hopped on my back with a strangling arm under my chin. All this happened at the same time; and I went to pieces entirely.

I kicked the snarling face savagely, caught the gun and wrenched it loose, smashed the owner in the face with the butt and threw the weapon at the other fellow.

Doubling forward with a wrenching heave, I pitched my garroter over my head and jumped forward, butting a man in the stomach. Springing up with a lifting drive, my right uppercut caught a convenient chin, and I walked in hand over hand—right, left, right, left—driving straight piston-fashion, until I was enwrapped in a smothering clasp of huge arms.

"Hold up, ye cyclone!" boomed through the deep chest under my face. "What d'ye think ye are—a whole football game? Th' war's over. Whoa, thin!"

Let loose, I faced a giant bluecoat. The gang of yeggs had disappeared, all but two. Mac was sitting on one in the middle of the street, and another was trying to get up near by; the officer collared the latter and stood him up. Aside from our own party, not another soul was in sight, for a street fight draws no crowd in that place.

"D'ye want to make any charge?" asked the officer.

"No!" Mac's heavy bass sounded with authority. He got up and helped his prisoner toward the basement door with a kick. "Scat! Turn that man loose. Why weren't you on your beat?" He faced the policeman severely.

The bluecoat blinked for a doubtful instant. He couldn't be sure Mac wasn't one of the new Commissioner's sleuths.

"I was called away," he began cautiously. "The man on the next beat——"

"Was drinking in Con's saloon, and you joined him," Mac interrupted. "Get back to your post!"

"Yes, sir!"

CHAPTER IX

ARRY IS PROPERLY SOUNDED

With a salute the officer wheeled and marched off, while we picked up our hats. The Englishman was settling his scarf pin and looking on in bewilderment.

"My word! This *is* a country!" he said to himself; then to me: "I cahn't thank you, sir—words are not good enough! But can you tell me why it is a bobby takes 'is orders from a professional?"

"Don't thank me."

I pointed to Sam.

"That's the man. And let's get out of here first and talk afterward. The climate is too strenuous."

"Just as soon as I——" Mac was searching the pavement all about.

"What you lost—your mascot?" asked the Englishman.

"Ee-ah—my eating-tobacco. It was in my inside pocket, too."

"To be sure!"

The Britisher spoke with sober sympathy.

"I'd never think of going any place without my lucky pin—that's why I didn't take it off when I came here. Is this—— But this cahn't be it!"

He picked up and displayed a three-by-six-inch slab of Drummond's.

"That's her!"

Mac seized and wiped the slab on his sleeve, tilted his head sidewise and paused with mouth open to ask, "Where'll we go now?" before he bit deep into a tough corner and worried it loose.

"Look, Mac! You're bleeding—you got nicked in the leg!" I noticed.

"M-hm!" Mac pulled up his trousers leg and mumbled his cud. "Gimme a handkerchief."

While I helped him bind his slight wound I whispered:

"The Englishman is imported to get Dan, and he thinks you're some kind of a crook—called you a 'professional.' Pump him if you can."

"That cut settles it," Sam announced. "We get a cab and go to my rooms; then the next thing will be something else. The night's young yet."

"Then I will say good night—and thank you again, gentlemen!"

'Arry touched his hat respectfully to Sam and me.

"Certainly not! We all go together," Sam announced with decision. And after respectful protest from British class prejudice it was so settled and executed.

THAT English cracksman was hard—hard-muscled and hard-eyed. He held you and himself in the places he thought proper, with a chilled-steel grip that never wavered or relaxed. Although his face was good-looking and fresh-colored, it showed no emotion and never thawed, while the clear blue eyes chilled you. I failed to find any weak spot in his armor.

On the other hand he was wily, under a hearty manner. While Mac 'phoned for a cab in a corner saloon we waited outside and took stock of bruises.

'Arry was the only one quite unscratched. I had a blackening eye, and Sam's jaw was badly bruised, not to mention his two loose teeth, which I assured him would eventually tighten up.

"It's not likely I can ever do anything to even up for what you gentlemen did for me," said Arry, eternally touching that hat of his. "If I were a gentleman it would be different."

"Sam's the man, as I told you," said I. "I didn't want in at all. I just trailed along, and when I saw that knife and gun I got frightened and lost my head."

"Then Lord 'elp the man that frightens you, sir, I say! And pardon me for ahsking, but that trick of using the end of a stick—how did you come to know that?"

"I learned that from an English ex-champion middleweight who taught, or teaches, boxing in New York—fellow by the name of Jem Taylor."

"Aye, indeed! My father used to know 'im well. It was he taught my father that trick, and he taught me, but I 'adn't the presence of mind to use it until you told me. I'm afraid, sir, you'll 'ave to admit it was your 'ead work and fightin' that pulled us through. It looks like your 'ead was what you call 'on the job,' sir!"

"Break away, there!" I growled, for he had hit my weak spot. "Nobody admires brain work in fighting any more than I. But you can't get around the fact that if I had gone wild like that in the ring, or in a real boxing-contest, I should have been beautifully and scientifically licked."

He let me have my own way and the last word. 'Arry the Toff, you may note, was a wise young man.



ON THE way uptown in a closed carriage I talked to Sam and kept one ear pricked toward 'Arry and Mac.

Now this Mac person, be it known, was a rough diamond only in pose. As a matter of fact I never met the combination of circumstances under which Mac could not, in Wheeler's phrase, make good and quit winner. He lost no time in approaching the cracksman, whom he proceeded to educate in the city government of New York. By overheard snatches I gathered that, first, a man's influence in New York did not depend on official position but on political pull; and second, if you had that pull, or the protection of one who had, you could do any old thing at all and get by.

In all this Mac spoke as one crook to another—to such good purpose, too, that right here the Englishman's alert suspicion seemed to slumber, and he asked if a man named Cameron really had the requisite amount of said influence to protect a professional cove in a stiff job. Mac assured him on that point, and in turn learned that Cameron was the head of the clique hostile to Wheeler and the old *régime*.

Also it appeared that said Cameron was now the proprietor of the gambling-place called the Art Gallery, where he had introduced 'Arry, and where 'Arry had already "win" some pounds on the wheel, while he was marking time and waiting for the ripening of a "plant" uptown, said plant being expected to yield enormous fruit within three days—an "inside job." I wanted to pat old Mac on the back.

"This leg is getting stiff," Mac announced suddenly, at Nineteenth Street. "If you'll just drop me at the hospital, I think I will turn in and say good night to you-all."

And when we had driven across to the hospital we all volunteered to carry him up the stairs. But he would not have it.

"Just let Corbin give me a shoulder—he knows how. See you-all again soon. Good night."

He put an arm around my shoulders and hopped up the granite steps, but once inside the door he let me go and walked as well as ever.

"I got a hunch Dan has had this expedition shadowed, Corbin. If he has, he may want to know what we got out o' that beef eater—I shouldn't wonder if he'd have some use for it right now, tonight. If he has, he'll show up, an' I'll be here. I don't like

this yeh 'Arry, anyhow, an' I am goin' to bed."

"Good boy, Mac! If you do see Dan—which I doubt—tell him that all I have found out, beside what he already knows about the chap, is that he is superstitious and thinks his scarf pin is his big medicine. So long!"

In the corridor I met the prettiest nurse in the hospital, Miss White.

"Oh, Dr. Corbin!" She was breathless from the stairs, but had lost her color. "Is Dr. Macdonald much hurt? I saw you helping him up the steps. I couldn't get away until I got somebody to take my place. Please tell me the truth——"

"Nothing but a scratch. Wait! He's not hurt a bit—walked all right as soon as we got inside. Now, now! I wouldn't lie to you for a farm. It won't even need dressing—just a strap or two. Well, then, go ahead and get cussed out if you don't believe me! Listen! Do you suppose I'd be running off if he were really—— There, there! Don't! What if Mac comes out and catches us now? Certainly, I understand—you need a rest. Good night. Don't mention it!"

Talk about a woman's infallible intuition!

CHAPTER X

AT THE ART GALLERY

NOW that the man whom the Englishman believed to be a fellow "professional" was no longer with us, 'Arry made another formal protest against being entertained by "gentlemen"; but Sam insisted that we were in America and that he must be allowed to show some hospitality. Moreover, while I was in the hospital Sam had learned that 'Arry was a crack shot with a revolver, and that he had used a Maxim silencer. Sam had at his rooms a Colt's .45 fitted with a new silencer, and he wanted to get some points from the Englishman; so that was how it happened that the famous foreign crook got into those apartments.

Sam was sorry for it later, but that night he was under the fascination of a new experience. He and 'Arry talked firearms and explosives, and the cracksman seemed thoroughly at home on those topics. With the silenced Colt he put three shots in a two-inch circle, firing across the room at the back of the fireplace; and the report was no louder than that of an air rifle.

When they had finished, Sam turned to me.

"Corbin, can we get into that roulette place up the street?"

I thought we had had enough for one night, but while I hesitated 'Arry spoke up. "I can take you in, sir, if you don't mind being seen there with me."

"That will be mighty good of you." Sam was putting the gun in a japanned metal box with a combination lock. "Do you mind, Corbin? I can't sleep before two, these days."

"Not a bit," I lied, noting that the Englishman's keen eyes were on a red leather box like a jewel case that Sam was putting away on top of the gun. "I suppose they serve a supper about now, or a little later."

"Yes, sir; and they do you jolly well, too." He looked at a handsome watch. "We'd better be starting, if you please, sir."

At the Art Gallery it seemed that 'Arry was a personage. He was shown in, and we with him, obsequiously; and we had a table at the far end of the long room at which to eat our supper. This was the only dining-table for special guests; other patrons ate standing at the sideboards. We refused to drink anything but coffee, thus giving pain to our colored waiter, but disposed of a planked steak à l'*Americaine* that deserved all the capital letters.

The long room where roulette and faro were played showed no change since I last saw it, except that a lot of paintings had been hung on its walls; and the "White Room," where the big poker game was played, was not changed at all. It was empty, and not so much as a flyspeck broke the blank white-painted surface of its walls. The floor was a sort of gray cement. It was lighted by a bunch light in the center of the ceiling. The round ornamental base of this light was the only thing that broke the surface of the room's boundaries.

"What's this for?" Sam asked as the Englishman was showing us around after supper.

"For any big-stake game, when it is important to have no possibility of fraud," 'Arry answered. "A jolly good thing; no chance of reflection by mirrors or any signal tricks; no way in or out but by the steel-padded door. The only thing of its kind anywhere. I understand this was an operating-room when this house was a secret hospital. Is that right, doctor?"

"Ye—— I don't know," I stammered. "How'd you know I was a doctor?"

The Englishman never blinked nor flushed a shade. The cold self-command of the man made one feel creepy.

"Your manner or talk, I fahncy," said he carelessly. "I beg your pardon. Do you gentlemen care to play?" he asked as we returned to the large room.

"Do you, Sam?" I called. "Come out of there! You won't find any spring door!" For Sam had stayed behind in the White Room to sound the walls with his stick.

"There's no place in there for a flea to get out or hide!" Sam announced, as he came out. "Play? I suppose we are bound to drop a few dollars on the wheel, to pay for our suppers."

"Not at all. How are you, 'Arry?" It was a round, shiny man with a little mustache. He had turned from the group around the roulette table to answer Sam and shake hands with the Englishman, who now introduced him as Mr. Cameron.

"My name is Corbin, and this is Sam McLeod," I filled in as 'Arry paused at our names.

"Glad to meet you, gentlemen." His glistening smile never altered. "And you are more than welcome, whether you play or not."

"I fahncy," said 'Arry, "I'd have 'ad six inches of steel in me before now, if it 'adn't been for these gentlemen."

"I told you to keep above Fourteenth with that pin." Cameron lost his smile and spoke sharply. "Remember, we can't afford to lose you!"

"Remember?" 'Arry fixed the little man with his cold blue eyes. "You haven't bought me yet!"

"I didn't mean anything like that," Cameron hastily averred. "Only that we feel responsible for your safety."

"Thanks! I have taken care of myself ever since I was ten years old."

"And done a mighty fine job, too," flattered the politician. "Try a whirl?" He waved a fat hand invitingly toward the wheel.

By this time there was much looking and whispering among the young college men and sports around the table, and they made room for us as we approached the wheel. 'Arry bought five one-dollar chips and put them on the black as the ball circled low in the bowl; it stumbled, jumped and clicked into its little stall.

"Sixteen — even — under — and black!"

droned the red-headed man who was pulling in and shoving out chips with both hands. "Again! Get 'em down while she rolls!" He started wheel and ball with the same motion, and looked wearily around the circle of faces. I was about to speak when he saw Sam and me.

"Hello, McLeod—and Corbin! Where you been all Winter with your Summer clothes on?" His face lighted reminiscently.

"H' are yeh, Redney? How's things?" We chorused his old greeting when he was rolling in "No. 17" back of the old Tremont Theater.

"Dull, boys, dull!" answered Redney. "Not a live one for weeks!"

"Too bad, Redney! Your eyes are poor!"

It came from behind us in a resonant voice that whirled us about with a jump.

"Wheeler!" some one breathed in an excited whisper. In the tense hush that followed I heard the Englishman at my side draw a sharp breath through his teeth.



AS ALWAYS, Wheeler's presence was instantly dominant; his figure, graceful with the grace of easy power, the focus of all eyes. Dressed as always like a Brummel, he leaned against the doorpost of the White Room, his pale, dangerous face startling in its keen menace, his long green eyes seeming to flare and flicker straight at the Englishman.

Not a man moved nor spoke until I stammered: "Why, Dan! Where—I didn't see you come in."

"Nor I," Redney muttered behind me. His high seat had commanded the entrance to the room. Dan's sardonic gaze never left the Englishman's face, pale now for the first time—and no wonder; nor did he seem to hear me.

"Englishman," said he slowly, with an edge on his voice, "you're a crack peter man, and out for the *Geld*. Can you feel a combination?"

"Yes," huskily whispered 'Arry; then cleared his throat and went on. "I take a back seat for no man on box-cracking, with soup or fingers."

"Now that one!" With one of his lightning-smooth movements Dan pointed to the safe in the corner. It was behind Cameron, and that gentleman jumped excitedly aside. "What's your record on a lock like that?"

"Let's 'ave a look!" 'Arry had himself in

hand now, and stepped around the table with exaggerated coolness. While he stooped to examine the safe, the silent group relaxed and breathed. One or two whispered. Cameron stepped forward and tried to appear at ease. Holding out his hand, he said:

"How are you, Wheeler? When did you come in?"

Wheeler turned his narrowed eyes on the chunky little district leader who was the most active of his enemies at the moment. From head to foot he leisurely looked the little man over. The contrast between the chubby fat body of the politician, that told its story of debauchery and weakness, and the lithe virility and menacing force of Dan's spring-steel figure, was fairly comic. There was a snicker in the crowd. Slowly Wheeler's thin, merciless lips took on a curl of contempt.

"Jim, you will never get me!"

He spoke with an amused tolerance. Then, without even a look at the outstretched hand or flushing face of the proprietor, he turned to 'Arry, who now stood up and faced him.

"Well, what's your figure?"

"It's a simple lock, a good one, and new. I can do it in five minutes." The expert spoke with authority. "No man living can do it in less than four unless he knows the combination. I will wager any amount on that!"

"I got you!" Dan caught him up. "Now listen! Roll that safe into the White Room, put in it as big a roll as you can raise, and lock it! Then shut me in the White Room with it for three minutes, and I will double every dollar you can find in the safe!"

There was a rustle of excited whispering, while the Englishman turned to Cameron. I heard Cameron:

"No! Never saw it myself until last week. No man knows it but me. It's a pipe!"

"How do I know you won't use soup, or that you are good?" 'Arry turned to Wheeler to ask, and stopped right there at the narrowing of Dan's lids.

"He's good for anything we can raise," Cameron said sullenly. "And what could he do with soup in three minutes?"

"That's a fact," said 'Arry. Then to Wheeler: "That goes! I call your bluff. It's double if you lose?"

"Yes. But I don't lose!" Wheeler appeared a bit bored as he waited, and that

galled the Englishman. He took out a bill book and counted out twenty one-hundred-dollar bank notes, glanced up at Wheeler's disdainful smile, and added ten more—Wheeler still smiling, narrow-eyed. 'Arry asked Cameron, "Loan me a thousand?"

"Sure! Five of 'em on such a cinch." He counted out the money from a roll and handed the bills to 'Arry, who turned up his nose.

"Not your footy little dollars, man—pounds! Five thousand dollars if you answer for 'is security!" 'Arry's face was keenly greedy, but suspicious.

"I'll take the whole thing on my own, if you're leery!" said Cameron, and added in an undertone, "His check is good for ten like it, and his word is better—I got to give him that!"

Meanwhile there was a bustle of preparation; the safe was emptied and its contents piled on the table. Here Redney stood over them with a Colt .45. A dozen excited men helped roll the safe into the White Room. Then 'Arry's money was put inside.

"How about boosting the ante?" Cameron asked Dan. "I'll double it!"

"No limit but your nerve!" Wheeler responded instantly. "But kiss your roll good-by before you turn the knob."

"Zing!" whispered a pop-eyed man who had pushed to the front and seemed unconscious that he was staring at Dan and talking to himself. "Just like that!"

Cameron hesitated, gazing at Wheeler's face, and finally put in his stake with the Englishman's. As he closed the safe door and turned the knob he asked, "Who's to hold the watch on you?"—looking up at Dan.

"Suit yourself, and smoke up."

As he spoke Wheeler took one gliding backward step inside the White Room, his level glance still on the Englishman, who was getting uneasy again. He now took his look from Dan as if with an effort and looked about for me.

"Doctor, will you time this man—three minutes?" The blue eyes were hard.

"No—— Yes, I will. Stop watch, anybody?"

Cameron gave me his. I snapped it, going and back, a couple of times and took my place with a hand on the doorknob.

"Ready?"

"Yes." Dan slid back another step with his eyes still holding the Englishman.

"Ready!" he repeated, working his hands together and flicking his fingers.

"Then—go!"

I slammed the door and clicked the watch, standing with hand on the knob.



RIGHT up to the slam of that door the powerful presence of the great gambler, the menacing glare of his level tiger eyes, had held not only the Englishman, but all of us present, as if benumbed. The instant the door hid him from sight we drew a deep breath and began to think for ourselves.

Not until then had we realized the daring of his task, or the mystery of his appearance. The peculiar threatening charm of his personality had held us in a firm grip. Now we knew he was locked in an air-tight room with a fortune in a steel safe. In three minutes he must come out with the money in his possession, or lose twice the amount. Even had he known the combination—and he could not know it—there would be no time to spare. The audacity of the thing took our breath.

Even if he did the impossible, and came out with the money now in the safe transferred to his pocket, what chance had he to get away from this nest of treacherous enemies?

Already Cameron was whispering at a table in the far corner with three of his men; two had slouch hats pulled over their eyes, and the third had the long straight hair and high cheek bones of an Indian half breed. Redney was watching this group, pale and scared.

It broke up as I looked. One man in a soft hat slunk out at the rear, the other at the front entrance; the half breed was urging something on Redney. Now he was threatening, and prevailing. There was a furtive exchange of revolvers; with the Colt under his vest the half breed darted swiftly out by the front way, bareheaded. Redney, with a nicked .32, stood at his post and watched Cameron, who sat alone at the table with head in hands.

Sam, who had missed none of this, came to my side and whispered, "Look at those negroes!"—jerking his head toward a bunch of waiters in the space between the two sideboards. "There's some devilment in the wind."

The colored men were huddled together, their faces a sickly slate-gray and the whites

of their eyes gleaming wide. The black man has some of the dog's sixth sense, by which he feels in the air the white man's fatal blood lust. From Cameron their wide-staring eyes rolled to 'Arry. I followed the direction. 'Arry was glaring at me, and in his shallow, hard-blue eyes was the fierce, unwinking, waiting look of the beast that preys.

I did not need to be told that my life would go up in the balance against even one "footy little dollar," if he were safe from punishment—and he was protected! Well I knew how well he was protected. Also, he was holding his watch on me.

"I got enough o' this. We never been here tonight at all, if anybody asks you!" muttered one of two pallid men who were edging to the door. The other one dodged ahead as he answered:

"I gotcha! I never saw the place," and he cackled hysterically. Two other men dodged through before the door closed.

I looked around at Sam. He nodded his splendid head, and his neck arched like a stallion's; his lips were a level line. I wished for Mac.

"Two minutes and an hahlf!" barked 'Arry.

I looked at the watch in my hand.

The slender needle was jerking around its last half circle—jumping faster and faster. I strained my ears for a sound from beyond the padded steel door. The hand passed the three quarters—the fifty—fifty-five—fifty-six — fifty-seven — fifty-eight — fifty-nine—

"Time!" I shouted and flung wide the door.

Silence for a few moments—silence breathless and incredulous; then a gasp of whispered ejaculations and a rush for the door of the White Room.

In the center of the White Room the safe stood in the white glare of the bunch light—open, empty, and alone!

CHAPTER XI

THE SPELL OF THE SECRET ORDER

THE Englishman was the first man to reach the safe, peer behind and into it, and pick up a scrap of paper from its top. This he unfolded, read and handed to Cameron, still dazed and speechless.

Over Cameron's shoulder I read:

JIM CAMERON:

Drink a bottle of Roederer's all round on
DAN WHEELER.

Cameron read it, the color coming back into his pasty face. Then he read it again aloud. As he finished he unfolded a bank note that had lain inside.

"One of my own hundred-dollar bills!" he chuckled. "By ——!" And he brought his fat fist down softly on the safe top. "There's no use talking, you got to hand it to old Dan!"

At that 'Arry broke loose, shook his fist in Cameron's face and used language.

"'And it to 'im! You —— ——! So you 'ave 'anded it to 'im—'anded 'im four thousand quid on a silver platter! It's a plant—a bleeding, nahsty Yankee trick; and I tike my hoath you're all in it. You——!"

He threw off the brake and coasted—coasted to where you need a diver's suit and disinfectants.

Cameron was no coward, and he was feeling bottled up himself.

"Can that, you hollering piker!" He shook an ineffectual fist under the British nose. "If you think you can wipe your feet on me because you're a bad man, you got two more thinks! I lose double, and you lose only what you win on my wheel. What license you got to welsh? You know where there's more—and if you don't like the color of Yankee money, you know what you can do. Got that?"

"I lost my temper." 'Arry got hold of himself with remarkable celerity. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Cameron! And the bargain still holds." He added the last in a low tone, face once more avidly eager.

"Jim Cameron never squeals—you get yours when you earn it!"

The fat man turned on his heel, still frowning. I was surprised at the stuff in the man as shown by his actions under fire. He had lost quite a bit of money, and had not quailed under the wrath of one of the most lethal of living crooks; I could understand how he came to be something of a leader.

Now he was partly cooled, and he turned back on an afterthought, came close to the Englishman—I was the only one, besides those two, who had not gone out into the main room—and whispered to him:

"You bet your life that deal holds good! And you got a hint now what kind of a blundering boob you are going up against—what? You want to get hep to your job;

you don't walk under the wire—get me? You got to go to it on your toes! See?"

He passed close to me on his way out to the roulette room, and I heard him mutter:

"And I hope to God you get yours! Dan is worth a hundred like you—you beef-eating——!"

Then he cleared his face to call for wine for the crowd.

"Our English cousin is a hard loser." Sam pointed out 'Arry a few minutes later, still poking about for a hidden panel in the White Room while the corks were popping in the outer room. "And I have had enough of him—also of events and ructions for this evening. What say if we 'it the 'ay, as we say in Piccadilly?"

I was more than willing, for it seemed to me that we had had more than our fair share of happenings. But it's my experience that things come more and more bunched, once they get to coming in bunches. We left the gambling-place while some of the guests were openly drinking Dan Wheeler's health and long life; for the Englishman had suddenly disappeared, and even Cameron joined in the chorus of admiration with apparent heartiness.

 IT WAS on our short walk to Sam's rooms that the thing happened—the thing that suggested the above proverb concerning the bunchiness of events. We had not gone two doors from No. 79 when a flash like heat lightning showed every detail of the deserted street. With it sounded the dull *phut* of a Maxim-silenced pistol.

Sam's silk hat hopped off backward with a hole diagonally through the edge of the crown. I pulled Sam into a basement entrance under some front steps.

"That rattlesnake Englishman!" I whispered. "He must be on the roof. I'd give something for just one good punch at his jaw—this is getting much too thick!"

"I doubt if he did it," said Sam quietly. "He wouldn't have missed—unless he wanted to. He's a dead shot."

We waited until two men came out of the Art Gallery, still talking about the magic vanishing of Wheeler, and then we went on to Sam's door. If some person unseen had taken a pop at us when we had started out from this door, it would have raised our hair; but by now we were accustomed to strange happenings.

"I suppose that man Wheeler lives at this speed all the time," Sam commented as we went upstairs. "What a life—and what a man! You didn't even do him justice, Corbin—he looks more than the part!"

"And he is more than he looks. What is it Emerson says about big men—something about their deeds being forgotten in their presence?"

"I thought of that very thing when he was holding that roomful paralyzed," said Sam. "I can see him now, fairly crushing us by the weight of his personality—but where do you guess he is right now? I want to meet him sure enough."

"And I know he wants to meet you," said I. "Now I think of it, I'll go broke he's upstairs, waiting for us. Come on!" And I forgot my tired legs as I ran up the last flight.

He was there, standing before the fire in the library. His silk hat was on the table, and he was still as fresh-groomed as if just from the hands of a valet.

"Pardon this intrusion, Mr. McLeod. That's what I'd say in a book—what?" Wheeler came forward with hand out-held. "But I wanted a word with you—if you object, I know the way out."

"No man was ever more welcome anywhere!"

There was no doubting the sincerity in Sam's tone. The two men met in the middle of the room, their eyes meeting level and true, and in them the honest admiration of real manhood, plus. At the same time they got each other by the hand in a grip that fairly made the floor vibrate.

"Try this chair." Sam pushed forward the big Morris. "And I have an extra bed I can recommend just as——"

"Some other time, thanks," Wheeler interrupted, sitting down and pulling out some cigars. "Try one of these. In about half a cigar I take the Twenty-third Street ferry. But I threw a 'shadow' off the scent and dropped in here to ask a few impertinent questions."

He looked at Sam steadily and spoke in his best English, so I knew it must be a matter of importance to some one.

"Anything I know," said Sam gravely.

"Who was at the bottom of the deal that squeezed you?"

"The Copper Syndicate, I think. They will win on it, anyhow."

"Yeh? And who's the main guy?"

"Thompson."

"N. K.? Good! I know who owns him. And that's all of that. Now, you don't have to answer; but—is Miss Cortlandt engaged to your former partner, Barney?"

Sam went a shade paler as he answered slowly—

"I don't know—but they grew up together, and he's a good deal of a man."

"Hm!" Wheeler's voice dropped and softened. "No system will work with the wheel or a woman. D'you want some advice from a sassy old crook?"

"Yes."

"Stick!" Wheeler got up, drawing out his watch, and looked up with one eye squinted from the smoke of the cigar in his mouth. "A — of a world, but the best we have in stock! It's later than I thought; so long!"

He was leaving the room, with his smooth athlete's stride, when I called—

"Dan, won't you tell us how you got out of that room?"

"Parlor tricks are no fun when you know how they work." He threw this over his shoulder as if speaking to a curious child, at the same time turning back to face Sam and say:

"That reminds me. Don't leave anything in that japanned lock box—remember that English Johnny had a peek-in—if you want to keep it!"

And he was gone.

"What a man!" said Sam, coming back to the library after seeing Dan down the stairs. "And what a life! Think of living at such a pressure all the time! Do you suppose—What the——"

He stepped to the table where Dan's hat had lain. There in a neat pile lay all the money won at the gambling-place. Sam looked up.

"Forgot it?" he asked.

"Dan doesn't leave things by mistake. He wants you to borrow it, if you can use it."

"Out of the question. You'll have to take care of it, and return it at the——"

"Not for a minute!" I said decisively. "Your rooms—your table—it's up to you, and I'll have nothing to do with it. Why not borrow it, if you're at all short just now?"

"Corbin, Thursday morning everything in these rooms except the japanned box and its contents will be carted off by the owner. I have sold everything else, and what's in

the box has value for me alone." In the firelight Sam's face looked tired and haggard. He went on grimly: "Tomorrow I'll send this money back to Wheeler. By Thursday—no, Wednesday night, I shall possess the clothes I wear, a small case that is now in that box, and a ticket to Topaz, Arizona; nothing else on earth."

"Why Wednesday night?"

"Because my option on the mine, 'The Hole in the Ground,' expires then. The only chance I have to win out will go Wednesday night. I shall follow Wheeler's advice and stick, on the chance that some miracle will send me an insane billionaire to buy a mine that is only a prospect. Nothing can keep me in New York another day after Wednesday."

"Absolutely nothing?"

I asked because I felt sure it was the girl who held Sam's future in her hand.

"Nothing but a miracle more impossible than the billionaire."

Yet it was something the very thought of which brought to his thin lips a softer curve. Presently he turned to me with his rare smile.

"Well, Doctor Corbin, you have done a good work this night. I have not had a chance to worry or grouch since you came to this room several hours ago, and I shall sleep for the first time in days and days. Some day forgive me for loading you with my worries. Now we'll to bed."

While we were getting ready to turn in Sam appeared at the open door of my room, taking off his scarf and collar while he talked.

"When I go over what I have seen this evening and try to explain it, it makes me dizzy! There are ninety-six questions to ask, but it would take until noon. It has occurred to me just now, however, that your friend Dan is mighty well posted and—— Well, things in general look as if he must have powerful backing somewhere. See what I mean?"

"He has. He has a lot of friends, even in the organization. It is only the new Chief and some of his gang that are down on him."

Gooseflesh ran up my back as Sam returned to his room, to think how near I had come to babbling something about a secret order without name. Not because Sam would think I was insane, but because I could see Searing as he looked when he was

led from the room where Dan had "broke" him, maimed and unmanned, begging and whimpering.

But before I fell asleep I felt sure that, if that gruesome order was back of Dan in this business, the Englishman was due to get his and get it good—even if the whole Political Ring should be behind him.

I followed the thing no farther in my thoughts, and I follow it no farther now. Even though I am no longer bound by any pledge, I shrink from setting down more words about that order. It's no right thing for a man to pry into!

CHAPTER XII

MISS CORTLANDT

WEDNESDAY afternoon I was crossing Fifth Avenue on my way from Sam's rooms, which I had found locked and empty for the third time, when I met Lorimer, whom I had not seen since the night of the smoker at the Harvard Club.

"You Corbin!" He stopped me. "Where you been, and have you seen Sam?"

"Not since Sunday morning. Have you?"

"Once—Monday. He was telling me—Good afternoon, Miss Cortlandt! Let me introduce Dr. Corbin."

A big touring-car had sneaked up to the curb, and in it a girl—but a girl!

Pictures in newspapers and magazines had made her a personage, great and remote, like Cleopatra or Portia; and to find her so delightfully a girl, warmly human, and with a lure that dragged alarmingly, was disconcerting.

I had presence of mind enough to get my hat off and mumble, but when she put out a hand—the impossible sort of hand and arm she would have, with the sort of curves it takes three looks to make sure of—that did settle it. I found myself in such a tangle of hands and hats—all mine, understand—that I had some difficulty in making a selection.

"I am still here!" said Lorimer. "Break away, there! It's my turn! But Corbin's just the man you want to know, Miss Joan; he can talk prisons and crooks, and know what he's talking about."

"Can you?" She leaned toward me eagerly, and I forgot my superfluous extremities. "How do you know about them?"

"I ought to—I have been in the Penitentiary six months."

"Really? What for—and when?"

Her quick look took me in from hair to shoes, and I was once more painfully present.

"He was put in' by the' commonwealth for his country's good," said Lorimer, "and he's not six hours out."

"I don't believe it." With her big violets-in-water eyes on mine, she asked, "What is he doing?"

"He's trying to be funny with that old stuff," I blurted. "Ever since I have been Prison Doctor over there all my feeble-minded friends have been working that stale joke, and it has just got around to Lorimer. Just let him dodder along—it amuses him."

"Are you the Corbin that tutored Jack—and taught him boxing? Of course not—that Corbin wasn't a doctor."

"I wasn't then, but I am now—very same man. In fact, I'll be anybody you say."

"Then you must come to the house as soon as you can, to tell us about prison life. Well?" She tilted her head sidewise.

Now, I knew I'd never go to that house, but for the time being I must have had the delusion that I was somebody in a book—some polished person out of a society novel; for I answered easily—

"Perhaps McLeod will bring me around some day."

"McLeod? Sam McLeod? When did you see him last?"

Her smile was gone, and her entreating eyes were large with anxiety.

"Sunday morning, when I left him asleep at his rooms."

"I was just looking for him—or news of him," Lorimer added.

"Please tell him I have a message for him—an urgent message—when you find him." Her attempt at brightness was a beautiful thing. "Good-by, and don't forget—anything!"

"Lorimer," I said, when the car had slid out of sight, "I don't know this Barney person, but that girl belongs to Sam. D'ye hear me?"

"Sam doesn't think so, and he's most interested."

"And for that reason the last man to know," said I with decision. "What's more, she's scared plumb foolish about Sam

right now. Do you know what you and I are going to do?"

"I am going to a show, and——"

"No, not you! You are going to help trail McLeod until we find him. Where do we look first?"

"I don't know Sam's habits. Do you know, all the fellows admire the old Spartan so much that they're a bit afraid of him, and he holds them at arm's length. Why are you so——"

"The fellows! Then why have you all—yes, you are in it—why have you all turned your backs and repeated slanders about him, just when he is ruined and about heart-broken?"

Lorimer's eyes stuck out, and he gasped:

"I—what? Say! I can lick any man who says I have turned my back on Sam! Any of the fellows would fight for him in a minute. If there are any stories going, they're only a joke to his friends. They'd rally 'round him to a man if they thought he was really in trouble! You don't mean he's actually embarrassed—lost any amount?"

"Listen!" I got his coat lapel. "At this moment Sam McLeod owns the clothes on his back, and enough money to get him to Arizona. Unless some one heads him off he'll be on his way before morning, and he firmly believes nobody cares enough to say good-by! Now it's right slap up to us. What?"

Lorimer's eyes still stuck out for a few seconds more. Then he gritted his teeth, slowly lifted a clenched fist and began to ease his mind; when he wound up the air had a bracing sulfurous tang. I concurred:

"Thanks! Me too—and then some! The heartless cruelty of New York will do as well as anything to swear at. Now let's get busy!"

And we went different ways.

CHAPTER XIII

SAM MCLEOD MAKES A RESOLUTION

MEANWHILE Sam was sitting in Dr. Starrett's office, facing the great man and waiting for his sentence. For pudgy, pop-eyed and red-headed though he was, Starrett was a great nerve specialist. His waiting-room on the most expensive of New York's cross streets was full, and he charged higher fees than any man in the city for telling people things they dreaded to hear.

He told them—indeed he did! There were those, irreverent, who said he might as well take an ax to his patient. Yet he was not cruel—only human, and of the motive artistic temperament that loves a tragic climax in the limelight. He particularly fancied himself in the rôle of the Arbiter of Destinies, who must be cruel to be kind.

Therefore, reading in Sam's thoroughbred features the grit to stand the gaff, he threw it in with a flourish. He laid aside his stethoscope, leaned back ponderously, pursed his full lips and ruminated in gloom that was fairly viscous. Sam gripped his chair arms and felt sick.

"Mr.—er—McLeod, I will be perfectly frank with you. You have reached the end of your rope—broken it, in fact! You present the classical symptoms of nervous and mental exhaustion, and you have not a minute to lose. You must get out on the plains—punch cows—live the mental and emotional life of a potato; and you must start now—tonight!"

Sam had come to the Doctor because he had noticed queer symptoms for the last dreary twelve hours, in addition to the old neuralgia, but this was preposterous. He was Sam McLeod the athlete—he had lived a clean and temperate——

"But, Doctor, I have no—— What if I don't leave the city?"

"Quite out of the question—absolutely!" An imperative wave of a fat hand. "You have no choice, sir! One week more—yes, twenty-four hours more of nervous tension in this place, and I will not answer for your sanity. Already you show the stigmata of mental—er—unbalance; even now it may be too late——"

The words went on and on, soggy words that fell like clods on a coffin; but Sam didn't hear them. At the second sentence he had noticed in his nostrils the strange sulfurous odor that he had smelled as a boy when he had had a bad fall, or when with the mitts he had got the first jaw jolt.

All day things had been queer. At times everything would withdraw to a great distance, and it would be a dizzy precipice to look 'way down where his feet were; then time itself was endlessly prolonged—beyond all reason. It is common for time to drag in cases of suspense, but this was different; weary hours had dragged and lingered while the minute hand stood still; morning was already lost 'way back in medieval haze.

With the specialist's stunning blow had come the horrid meaning of it all. He was already insane—mad! These impossible distortions of time and space were the first delusions of insanity!

Close on the heels of that came another shock. He had not mentioned these sensations to the doctor, yet the great man had divined them, so there must be something in his appearance that was odd. Moreover, perhaps the doctor was thinking even now of calling up an officer to have him taken to a madhouse! He got up with a tremendous effort to appear at ease.

"Thank you, doctor, for making it so clear. I leave on the next train. And now——" His hand went to his pocket, where lay two tens and some silver.

"Twenty, please——" very low and casual. Then, cheerfully—"You'll find ranch life not bad. With a little capital it has been made to pay well. Thank you. *Good-by!*"

The street looked familiar, stretching out toward the red sunset. He walked in a numb daze toward Broadway. . . . A madhouse! Once he had been in one, and he recalled the pitiful sights. Then and there he had decided that insanity was the one thing that left One Thing to do. . . . He would never be a pitiful spectacle. Now that he had got his, he faced the fact squarely.

One thing was fortunate; there was nobody left to care, and his affairs had wound themselves up already. The one question was: How?

At the next corner—the very corner Lormer and I had left not a half hour before—a newsboy stuck a pink sheet in his face.

"Pipeh, misteh? Suicide in de riveh!" The headlines blared:

MAN JUMPS FROM FERRYBOAT BODY NOT RECOVERED

"Certainly, son! Thank you—the very thing! Keep the change—it's worth a fortune!"

The boy looked from the quarter in his hand to the figure vanishing through the traffic:

"Well, whaddyuh think? Wheels, or I'm a Guinea!" he whispered to himself.

All unknowing that Dr. Starrett's diagnosis was confirmed, Sam was congratulating himself on an easy way out of the fix. At this hour the Jersey ferries were all but deserted; half way over the rear platform would be empty. Already it was dusk, and

no man would see him drop into the water.

Before daylight the ebbing tide would have taken his—hat far outside the harbor. Simple, and leaving no muss—no horror. He had not an instant of hesitation—his sole anxiety was not to make trouble for anybody, and he had the right plan. He had gone as far as to start to get on the Twenty-third Street crosstown car when he saw the elegant, frock-coated figure of Dan Wheeler on another car east bound.

Dodging behind his car, he waited until he was sure Wheeler could not see him; then instantly decided to go to the Desbrosses Street Ferry, where he would be sure to meet no one he knew.

Would they 'phone the police and head him off? With a bitter smile he realized that this was the morbid suspicion of the insane. Probably not a soul in Manhattan was giving him a thought.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GAME THAT NEVER WINS

NIGHT had fallen, and sputtering arc lamps flickered over the dingy river-front square at Desbrosses Street. Across the uneven pavement a few belated commuters were straggling aboard the waiting boat.

Slowly following, Sam reflected that this was a sordid stage-setting for his last great act. It would be a flat anticlimax anyhow; in contrast with the present there spread before him the brilliant, crowded scene at the class races on the Charles, such a few years back, when he was swinging with his crew—a glorious machine—to victory in sight. Again he felt the swell of his splendid muscles—the crack of the splintering oar; then, as he still swung in unconscious unison, came the instant decision to get the useless weight out of the boat. He saw the fluttering throng hushed as he rose in the frail shell—felt the icy shock as he dived, down and forever down—the strangling bursting struggle in his chest—the roar and rush as the Great Dark flooded his consciousness—then silence!

How the whole world had fawned upon him then—how the future had glowed with rainbow promise! And now, he asked only to drift out unseen on the night tide, to be forgotten.

But half across the square he stopped. His lips had formed the words—

"But in that sleep, what dreams may come?"

The trite question, so often mouthed in many keys, had gripped him. And there, unconscious of curious stares, he looked up and said the first prayer since he had lost his mother.

It was a simple, unashamed appeal for help, and for pardon if he was doing wrong in his perplexity. When he had finished he stood for a moment, waiting for a sign.

"Say, mister! You lost yer boat. Want a paper to read while you wait?"

It was a bright, tired little face that looked up at him; and there were the same indecent headlines announcing the suicide in the river. He bought all the "stickers," and the boy took to his delighted heels.

He had his sign. Now there was another long twenty minutes to wait for the next boat.

During that period he lived several lifetimes, but relentless Time brought the boat at last. He went aboard congratulating himself that he had not been followed, also that he had not become violent nor otherwise betrayed himself. Tense with impatience, he stood inside the driveway cavern and watched the late arrivals. It had begun to rain.

At the last moment a taxi rushed up and discharged a huge umbrella on legs that limped slowly aboard and into the cabin. They were off at last.

Then he relaxed, relieved. He had been ready to slip into the water between the boat and the dock at first sight of anybody or anything that looked like pursuit; for he had determined not to be caught and confined.

Half way across, the rear platform of the ferry boat was empty, as Sam had foreseen. There was no reason to wait longer, and Sam was never a waiter. Buttoning his coat around him, he stepped out to the shadow of the driveway. Through the steady sweep of the wet sea breeze from the harbor he walked deliberately to the collapsible iron gate at the stern, never once taking his eyes off the white, boiling wake of the boat.

He would draw his lungs full of water at the very first, to shorten the straining, bursting agony in his chest. It would be over in a few seconds—then would come the flashing, roaring chaos, then the Long Dark—and the Silence!

He put his hand on the cold iron to step over—filled his lungs for the last time, and looked his last at the lights of Manhattan—lifted his foot—

"Son! That game never wins!"

Startled, he turned toward the firm hand on his arm.

"Wheeler! Wh—where did you come from?" he stammered. "And where do you come in on this?"

"Right here." Wheeler stepped between him and the gate, and flicked overboard the ashes from his cigar like a stage villain. "Between a fool and the deep drink!" Seeing the big man stiffen, he added, "Now, don't get rough, neighbor!"

"Look here!" Sam's sudden anger surprised even himself. "You are a dangerous man, but you can't scare a man who wants to die! There's no time to argue—stand back or get hurt!"

At the first words the cracksman laid his cigar on the rail. Then he carefully put his hat down inside, on the deck. When Sam advanced with his climax, Wheeler modestly murmured, like a miss urged to play "a selection"—

"Well, I'm a bit out of practise, but——"

Then they met.

The young athlete—Sam was six feet and one ninety stripped—seized Dan's shoulders and dashed him aside. He met no resistance; the other simply yielded. Sam felt his coat collar caught on each side of his throat, felt himself pulled still farther to the side, and was drawn down upon his opponent, who fell away before him, still holding to his coat.

But as Sam fell atop, a foot was placed across his groin. A sharp downward tug on his collar, a quick lifting heave from the foot—and he was in the air, turning a neat somersault.

He saw the deck and the whole ferry boat, the river and the city's lights, rotate in a dizzy vertical circle around him as an axis. He crashed to the deck on his back in a blaze of fireworks!

Before the weaving fire streaks faded he felt himself deftly rolled over; his knee was bent sharply over a fist placed behind it as a fulcrum, and held taut by a toe hold. Unaware that he was held by one of the most powerful grips of ancient Nippon's art, he tried to get up. The result was sudden collapse and an involuntary groan.

With straining muscles and gritting teeth

he tried again and again, until at the fourth attempt he fainted outright.

When he came back to this world of pain and struggle he was still in the undignified prone position, and his first movement brought another groan of despair.

"Don't take it so hard, son!" said a stimulating but unsympathetic voice. "It's a simple trick, but Sandow couldn't beat it. Be good, and I'll let you up. We're almost in, and we'll have an audience then."

Sam's humiliation would not let him speak at once, and Wheeler added:

"This won't get you anything. Will you listen and be a good Indian if I let you up?"

"Yes," grumbled Sam, "I'll listen."

He was free as he spoke. When he had got to his feet and picked up his hat Wheeler stood before him as trim as always. The cracksman threw away his cigar and was about to speak when Sam savagely broke in:

"But if you think I give up, you're mistaken! I'll tear out an artery with my teeth before I'll be taken to a madhouse!"

"Nobody will put you anywhere, son!"

Folding his arms in a Napoleonic attitude, Wheeler fixed his hypnotic green eyes on Sam's and stuck out his lean, square jaw as he shot out: "You're not dippy, you fool! You're doped!"



"WHAT! What's that?" Sam shouted, and caught Wheeler's arm in a hand that trembled. "For Heaven's sake, man, be careful! Did I hear straight? Say that again!"

He was shaking with an ague he could not control. His deep-set eyes were wild and lit with fearful hope. He was a sight to choke the throat with pity. But Wheeler wasted no useless sentiment; that was not his build. He was of the merciless, aggressive sort; one of the men who never sob nor sympathize, but cut deep at the cause of pain. Predatory by nature, yet these be the men on the job when stark things are doing.

To such a man trouble is no matter for tears, but a foe, seen clear and clean in all his naked ugliness—to be spitted with cunning, vicious death thrust. Such a man was Wheeler; and because he was just such another in the making, Sam felt and responded to the truth in the cracksman's virile tones, tense with man-power:

"That's straight talk! You took six tablets—count 'em, six. Loaded, those tablets were. See? Loaded with *Cannabis Indica*.

hashish, Indian hemp. You've read about it; gets to work a day late, but raises — with your time- and space-sense—all medical students try it once. Corbin told you—warned you—remember? And Corbin told me just now, when I started on your trail, that you might try this suicide stunt after what Starrett told you!"

Here the cracksman made his most arresting gesture, raising a slow finger.

"Son—your ninety-horse-power specialist was barkin' at a knot. All that ails you is pain pills, loaded with heathen dope."

Wheeler finished his slow, jerky speech—perhaps the longest on his record—before he lowered that upright finger. As if released from a spell or incantation, Sam's eyes fell with it and he dropped his face in his hands, every muscle relaxed.

Every slow vibrant word of Wheeler's had carried with it conviction. He recognized, as they were mentioned, the symptoms of the effects of the wonderful drug that transports the Oriental to Elysium—and gives the average Anglo-Saxon a trip to the other place; and for the first time, he realized his escape. It meant that he owed to Dan Wheeler all that one man could owe to another; it meant that he was restored to life, sound and well, for his common sense told him he was physically as good as ever.

"Dan Wheeler!" He looked up, when he had stopped shaking, and his face was quizzically bright beneath a surface severity. "You have fought many times to kill!"

"Not such a many. You been listening to Corbin!" Wheeler was primed for trouble on the instant. "He puts it at two dozen, and there were thirteen only, all told—and they were every one looking for it! The only scrap I ever had that I started myself, I got beautifully licked."

"The 'dude in the bar room'?" said Sam. "Yes—I know."

Then there was something about the great crook's unconscious selflessness, in his utter unconsciousness of having done anything requiring gratitude, that brought sudden tears to Sam's deep dark eyes. His heavy voice shook as he held out his hand.

"Shake, Dan Wheeler. You have licked one man to save him, who will never forget it as long as he remembers anything!"

Wheeler shook, but as he did so he grumbled:

"Licked nothing! If I'd licked you, you

wouldn't be telling me about it so darn soon afterward!"

"I imagine I'd be in a box," Sam assented. "But I've got to say something—try to tell you what I feel. I can't make a fine-sounding speech to fit the occasion; but just remember that I owe you a life—a poor thing, but mine own'—and such as it is, it is yours to command."

"You may change your mind," said Wheeler grimly. "Let's quit making speeches. I've got some 'phoning to do while the boat waits."

CHAPTER XV

"THE ONE MAN TO GET MCLEOD!"

THIS is what had happened to put Dan "hep" to Sam's trouble and the way he had chosen to get out of it. After an hour of hurried search Lorimer and I met on a Broadway corner in the midst of the theater-going crowd. Each of us shook his head as we came in sight, and compared lists of the fellows we had found or missed.

"There's the Cortlandt town car," said Lorimer as a palatial limousine hove in sight.

It made toward us and drew up at the curb. Miss Joan's dazzling face appeared at the door, anxiously questioning.

"Not a trace of Sam, so far," said Lorimer.

She hid her disappointment like a soldier to smile her gratitude.

"Where have you looked, and how long?"

"Everywhere, ever since we met you."

"You angels! That was sweet of you."

But her lips were quivery as she added, "Then I suppose there's nothing else to do?"

"We have just begun," Lorimer asserted.

"Hardly started," I added.

"You men! Do get in here—quick!"

Face all alight and acolor, she moved back and patted the pearl-gray cushions. As we seated ourselves in the faint-scented luxury inside she leaned toward us, a hand on our knees.

"What do we do next? Can either of you drive a car?"

"He can!" I tried to be cheerful about it.

"Then listen! I have just remembered that Sam has had neuralgia and may have gone to Dr. Starrett. Dr. Corbin and I will go to the office—Dr. Starrett is our doctor—while John takes Mr. Lorimer up to the house to get the touring-car. John will

come back to get me and take me home, where I shall have to do the woman act—just wait!

"Meanwhile you two can make better time with the car—it's ninety horsepower—and perhaps find Mr. McLeod. Well?" She saw our eagerness, and reached for the speaking-tube. "John! Let us out here; then take Mr. Lorimer to the house to get the other car. Come back to Dr. Starrett's for me."

So I had the reigning Princess of New York in my sole care. If Aunt Mary could see me now!

"Do you know the doctor?" She asked me as we turned into his street.

"Don't I!"

"Then he has told you you were a wreck?" She laughed a very little. "That is his 'strong hold.' He's an old dear, but he makes mistakes."

"Doctors do—except in books," said I sapiently.

"*Ain't* it the truth?" as Mammy used to say! In books the plain country doctor prophesies to a second just when the hero will wake up in the heroine's room to ask if he's in heaven, and to be told in ravishing accents he is not to talk." She was making a brave try at being entertaining.

"And when it comes to the big city specialist," I added, "he's an eccentric miracle worker whose name is to be breathed only in whispers, and his fee not at all. But in New York specialists make more mistakes than miracles. Starrett is spoken of in certain professional circles as a walking encyclopedia of misinformation."

"He really knows better—" her loyalty was a lovely thing to see—"but he has to draw it strong. It is hard to choke off the neurasthenic and money-mad captains of piracy and make them be good. He'll be cross if he is called away from his dinner—better let me stroke his fur."

We were at the top of his steps now, and I assented gladly. The colored person who guarded the outer portal showed his teeth as he recognized Miss Joan. She was shown into the dining-room, and I was left in the waiting-room for only a very few minutes before she came out, looking white and frightened.

"Come outside—where there's air!" she whispered, and caught my arm as we went down the steps. The air seemed to brace her.

"I'm afraid I have offended the doctor—

I don't know what I didn't say to him—but he told Sam he was insane and sent him West on the first train. I know it's foolish, but I feel sure I—we shall *never* see him again if I—if we don't stop him! Tell me——”

She looked on the very edge of crying. I would have told her anything to stop it, to comfort her.

“Sure we'll stop him! Don't worry—I—I know a man——”

There I broke off with open mouth. I was to meet Wheeler at that very moment, in front of the Art Gallery, and tonight was to be the big night at the gambling-place; for the Englishman had challenged Dan to meet him there. It was not specified what they were to do—what sort of a contest they should engage in—but there was no doubt it was to be a final and conclusive trial of strength between the two famous crooks. I had forgotten it when I first met Miss Cortlandt.

“Yes—you know a man——” She shook my arm impatiently, then flushed. “I beg your pardon, but I am wild. There is the car!”

“I know the man to get Sam, if we are not too late.” I waked up at sight of the high-powered touring-car followed by the limousine. “Here's where we go get him, and we've got to break speed limits!”

“Take me with you that far—I want to see the man, and I've something else to say——”

“All right—in here!” I wasn't very polite. “Get going, and don't see the cops at all,” I called to the dignified chauffeur, and gave him the number.

“This is what bothers me,” she said as we shot off silently. “The doctor said Sam was queer, that he saw him reaching out to the desk when he thought the doctor didn't see, as if to see if it were real. Did you think—*is* anything the matter with Sam?”

“Nothing but worry and neuralgia—did the doctor say anything about that?”

“Yes. He said Sam told him of taking six tablets of some kind last night, before he——”

“Six? Are you sure it was six?”

“Perfectly, for I remember——”

“Good Lord!” I exploded sharply. “Tell that man of yours to yank her wide open and let her zizz!”

She had the sense to see it was no time for pretty words, and did as she was told

with no lost motions. We shot smoothly ahead, and Lorimer honked along after us in the big-hooded touring-car. Luck was with us, and not a policeman in sight.



SKIDDING into the street where I looked for Dan, I saw him standing alone near the curb in front of the Art Gallery, a picture of well groomed elegance and ease.

“There he is!” I called out. “The one man to get McLeod!”

Before the car had fairly stopped I was out and had him by the coat; my rapid words boiled out three deep.

“Steady there, doc!” Motionless, he turned on me the long-slit tiger-amber eyes. “Steady as she runs! Count ten, and take a deep breath. *Now* shoot it!”

I let go his coat—for he hated to be touched—and told him what Starrett had told Sam, about the tablets that were on my conscience, and why I was scared.

“And the girl, Dan! She doesn't know what I have just told you, but—— Come and see her!”

The car had stopped a length back. Dan tossed away his cigar and followed me. As I introduced him he took off his hat and held it by his side, looking the young beauty straight in the face. But he was a figure of a man!

He mumbled no formalities, said not a word, but his steady eyes read her through, and she leaned toward him in soft appeal.

“Mr. Wheeler, can you spare time to help out a girl in trouble—who has nothing to offer in return?”

How did she know that nothing else would move him? She was Woman. Dan's face never altered a shade as he said:

“Tell me about it. What do you want?”

Cold and hard as it sounded, it completed her surrender; she let herself go entirely.

“I want Sam McLeod.” The long dark lashes drooped for an instant, then lifted, showing eyes that swam. “Will you get him for me?”

“Sure I'll get him!” said Dan crisply, and as he turned toward me he finished under his breath: “But not for your *beaux yeux*!” Then he roused me from my staring bewilderment with one narrowed glance.

“Call that taxi!” he ordered. The cab had passed. I ran after it a little way, and when I came back the girl was urging him to use the touring-car.

"It's a fast car, and it's here for no other purpose." She waved her hand toward Lorimer, whose mouth was open. It was his first sight of Wheeler.

"Here's a good place for it," Dan asserted carelessly; then to me—"If your dope is right, he'd shy at the sight of anybody or anything he knew."

"What can we do?" I asked. "Give me something to do, or——"

"Take the girl home and make her stay there." He came close to me to whisper:

"Some girl that, and handy with her eyes. Leave her at the Fifth Avenue shack and come back here. Tell the Englishman I was called away. I will meet him here at one o'clock, *unless he sees me before*—got that? Tell it to me!"

After I had repeated it he went on rapidly:

"Don't let that Johnny draw you—he will try for a scrap. Don't get tangled up in any rough stuff, but have the car at Desbrosses Street Ferry in an hour."

The taxi had drawn up to the curb ahead of the limousine. On his way to it Dan stepped close to the anxious girl to ask her—

"If I get your man for you, will you see he doesn't get loose again?"

"I promise!" she said soberly.

"I got you! You get him!"

He sprang lightly into the cab and was off.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ENGLISHMAN TAKES NO CHANCES

THE instant the cab disappeared around the corner we three turned to look at one another. Wheeler always held the middle of the stage and all the audience so long as he was in sight; now he was gone the street was silent and empty.

Lorimer had stared at him all this time in open-mouthed absorption, not missing a word or movement of the famous cracksmen-gambler. When I looked at him now he closed his mouth, shook his head slowly and waved his hands over his head in helpless pantomime. After this he drew a long breath and expelled it.

"Whee-e-e-e! Say! That man Wheeler doesn't have to make up to look his part, not any! You can see man-tamer sticking out all over him—what?"

"Heavens!" Miss Cortlandt came out of a thoughtful silence with a start of alarm.

"Have I been talking to the man-killer? Is that the man I have heard so much about?"

"He's Dan Wheeler, and he is—a good many things," said I. "Among others, he's the man to find Sam McLeod. For he knows New York and what's in it better than the Central Office itself, and he has some mysterious means of getting what he wants, no matter what it is. For instance, he already knows that Sam went to Desbrosses Street, and he will get him, sure."

"It's easy to believe that, because I want to," said the girl brightly. "I want Sam to come to the house tonight for a very special reason, and all my plans would be spoiled if he got off to the West right now. I was foolishly scared about it, but I have felt perfectly safe ever since I saw your Wheeler man. He looks dangerous, but efficient."

"He isn't dangerous, really," said I. "He is simply fatal. And now, if you will let Lorimer and me take that touring-car, we'll see you home and go to meet the prodigal at the ferry."

It was a huge gray-granite palace fronting on the Park before which we stopped, one of the Seeing-New-York sights; but only part of the lower floor was alight.

"The servants are still in Newport," Miss Cortlandt informed us. "But I am going to call up some people and organize an impromptu surprise party for Sam's reception. So tell any of his friends you see, and bring Sam with you as soon as you can get him—no matter how late. It is no common occasion."

Lorimer accepted for both of us. As we started off in the big car for Desbrosses Street he turned to me.

"Have we been tearing up the pavements just for a surprise party, or is there more to this?"

"I don't know about the party," said I, "but I do know that if Dan fails to get hold of McLeod it's poor betting that you and I ever see him again, and I shall always blame myself for it."

He was sympathetic and consoling when I had told him about the tablets, and what I feared. He advanced all the arguments I had used to reassure myself, and added—

"Sam wouldn't go off at half cock; he would consult some other man before he did anything."

"Unless the stuff muddled his wits," I added. "I took some once, like all med.

students, and never any more for mine! But it's in Dan's hands now and we can only wait. You go to Desbrosses Street Ferry; Dan has had Sam shadowed and that's where he went. You wait for him there. If I get through with my errand at the Art Gallery, I'll come down there too."

"Don't *you* go to getting into trouble!" was his warning as he set me down in front of the gambling-place. "We have had enough of excitement for one evening!"

"Right you are; but such things always come in bunches," I answered, and watched him out of sight with a feeling that there was something more coming. But if I could have had any warning of what was actually in store for some of us—— That is one of the profitless ifs that come too late, however.

I stood on the sidewalk, hesitating whether or not to go inside. Dan had said, "Come back here," to meet the Englishman. Did he mean where we stood or in the rooms upstairs? A few men passed in while I was undecided, and they were whispering excitedly. I heard one say:

"They wouldn't dare go so far as to croak him in the gambling-rooms. If they do get him it'll be on the Q. T."

"But you can write home it's no yegg job," said the other. "No gangster in New York would touch it with tongs. They may frame up a public shooting-scape with the Johnny Bull in the star part—he's a wooze with a gat!"

"He'd better be!" the first man assented. "And he'll need his rabbit's foot——"

They went up the steps, and I heard no more. But they had hardly got inside when a closed car pulled up near me, and out stepped Cameron.

He took a cautious look around, saw me, and hesitated, holding the car door half open. Then he shut the door and stepped up to me.

"How are you, Doctor?" He spoke quickly, his eyes searching the street. "Seen Wheeler?"

"Yes. He's gone," I said. "He left a message for your friend the Englishman—if you've got him in that car, you can let him out."

"Yeh—I know Dan wouldn't do any dirty trick, but 'Arry is mighty suspicious."

He went to the car and opened the door. "He's gone, and left word for you with Dr. Corbin," he told the man inside. "It's all right."

"Right or wrong, I take no chances!" said the Englishman as he got out. "What's his message?"

The last he addressed to me as he advanced quickly and threateningly. He was no longer the rather frank, boyish person I had seen at Tom's place. His square-jawed face looked lean and hawk-like, and the hard, light-blue eyes inhuman in their pitiless menace. He grated on me, and I resented his contemptuous manner. I looked him coolly in the face a moment before I spoke.

"He was called away. He told me to tell you he would meet you here between twelve and one—if you did not *see him before*."

"Aye!" The cold face smiled nastily. "I might 'ave known he was a coward—none but a coward would shoot at 'is friend from behind, and in the dark!"

I wanted to smash that nasty smile so far into his face that—— But I recalled what Dan had said, and held in. If there was to be rough stuff, he must start it.

"The most pitiful coward," said I slowly, advancing my jaw, "is the man who calls another a coward behind his back."

His cold sneer never altered a shade, and I deliberately turned away. That was my mistake. I had turned only half way when he landed on my jaw—so I learned afterward. At the time I only got the bright lights that were swallowed in darkness.

CHAPTER XVII

DAN WHEELER IS SCARED AT LAST

I OPENED my eyes on a small white-washed room. I was looking up into a dark face framed in straight black hair. The owner of it said—

"You stand up—yes?"

I did so, and felt of my sore jaw. It worked all right. The bare room contained two large boxes. I sat down on one and looked at my jailer, for that was what I assumed him to be.

Now that I saw his face right side up, I recognized the Indian-looking man who had swapped guns with Redney in the roulette room the other night.

"How long are you going to keep me here?" I asked, at the same time figuring on my chances of downing the Indian and getting away. The Indian smiled, showing some nice white Japanese teeth, as he answered distinctly:

"The honorable Doctor makes pleasant. He may command me anything."

"You've been reading Herrick," I guessed. "Where am I—and why, how and when?"

"The honorable Doctor turned back on English crook too previously. The English crook gave straight biff on jaw. By order of the great Wheeler I am spy in gambling-place—said owner not knowing—and see scrap from door. I bring you here—adjoining basement to gambling-place of Mr. Cameron. Yours to order!" He had saluted at mentioning Wheeler, and now saluted again, standing at attention.

"You're all right!" said I. He saluted some more. "So this is the basement of the vacant house next door to the Art Gallery! Is this how Wheeler got out of the White Room after opening the safe?" It had just occurred to me.

"With humble help of yours truly," said the Jap. "I show where. Come!"

"I ought to be getting downtown, but lead on!"

I got up, no longer dizzy. Before leaving the basement room the Jap opened one of the boxes and took out a roll of narrow stair carpet. With this under his arm he led me up three flights of stairs through the bare echoing halls, entered an empty room and flashed a pocket light on a cupboard door.

Opening the cupboard and sliding the panel at the back to one side, he shot a beam of light along a low, attic-like space.

"Here we progress four-footed," he stated, and unrolled the carpet ahead of him as he crawled on all fours, flashing the light back for my guidance. "We are presently on top of White Room," he whispered as I crawled after.

He meant *at present*, I found. For the carpet, unrolled, revealed a coiled knotted rope which he laid aside. The trail ended at a circular door like a manhole—just the size of the base of the bunch light in the ceiling of the White Room below us.

"I possess hunch that there is secret frame-up now framing, down there!" he whispered, raising the circular trap. "Be pleased to look and listen!"

The round opening showed the upper side of the base of the lights, and he slipped a small slide that left a peep hole, invisible from below by reason of the dazzle of the incandescents.

I was about to ask how the lower trap

worked, for I could see steel bars and insulated wires, when I heard in the room below Cameron's voice raised angrily.

"How the — am I to blame because he didn't show up? He says he'll be on the job before one; and when Dan Wheeler says he'll be *there*, you can go broke that's where he'll be, and on the tick! Lemme tell you one other thing. If you're banking on Wheeler's being a quitter, or having a yellow streak anywhere in his system, you're framing up a funeral where you do the star part! Are you listening?"

He was talking to the Englishman.

I could see the two men seated facing each other across a table. The strong light showed the crook's face, keen and acridly disdainful, as he craned his neck forward.

"You Americans are a sickening lot of children. You're too easy, the whole — lot of you! I've had you all fooled from the start. If it weren't for this Wheeler's sneaking dodge tonight, I'd have had him scragged and been on my way to pull off that big job—where I get my pay! It's all ripe to pull off—or will be in an hour—and it's got to be pulled off on time or it's no good! Understand? And if I lose it, you and your boss'll be worse than sorry—I can tell you!"

"Uh-huh! Hot air!" Cameron sneered, and tried to look unconcerned. "You been throwin' off about America, but I don't see where you're such a much. You got to show us!"

"I'll show you before I finish—don't worry! And I'll do it single-handed against the lot of you; for I can see half of you are with this Wheeler at bottom, and if you weren't a pack of fools you'd see he has spies in this very house. I'm not giving away my game, but here's the point." He shook a finger in the other's face. "I'm not going to lose this big trick, just because this — — — Wheeler has squealed out at the last minute—understand?"

"And I take no chances of spending even one night in one of your nasty jails. You've got to see that the coast is clear—call off the bobby on the beat—so I can get to work within an hour and a half. I will get your man afterward, but this job can't wait."

Cameron pulled at his lip and considered. At length he said:

"I got no license to do it. Orders is that you can rob that house after you have delivered the goods—put Dan out of business."

And I can't call off the 'bobby.' Inspector Croft is watching the house himself, for he knows that necklace is worth half a million, and nobody but the Chief himself can fix it for you. You'll have to see the Chief."

"Then go get him!"

"What! Say, man—are you drunk?"

"Listen!" The Englishman was venomously in earnest. "I have got next, as you call it, to your whole rotten system! If I lose the swag in this job I can start trouble that will shake up the Chief himself and put Inspector Croft in good—and I'll do it! Tell your Chief to be here, in this room—I take no chances with spies—within the hour. And tell him——" The English crook leaned forward and whispered something in Cameron's ear that made the fat man turn a mottled blue.

"Why didn't you say so? Don't do anything until I get back!" Cameron got up hurriedly. "I may not find him right off, but he'll come. You wait right here!" He clapped on his hat and rushed from the room.

 "SHOW me the way out of here!" I hissed, rising and bumping my head. "Wheeler must know about this, right off quick! Isn't there a back way out on the next street?"

"Without doubt!" The Jap was following along the low passage. "We make getaway always by back entrance, and you can get cab at corner."

It was rough country through the back yards across to the next cross street, but barked shins didn't count with either of us and the Jap was always cheerful. He showed me through another basement on the other side of the block and quickly hunted up a cab that could go.

"To meet again!" He waved his hand gracefully as I got in. "Tell the honorable Dan I am on the job!" And he vanished.

The taxi made good time, but it was no pleasure trip to the downtown ferry landing. All the way I kept seeing the face of 'Arry the Toff, sneering and pitiless, terrifying in its cruelty and cold power. The man surely had deceived me among others, and had some sure scheme in reserve. Was he a match for Wheeler? How would he get him? Could I get word to Dan in time? And had Dan caught McLeod in time?

Although I had warned McLeod not to repeat those tablets more than twice, I

knew I should never think of him without a sick sensation if he had—— But of course Dan would head him off! I refused to think about it; therefore could think of nothing else for the last half of the way. The taxi bounced into the familiar square—there was the Cortlandt touring car waiting, but the man in the seat was a policeman! I paid my man and sent him back, my hand shaking so that I dropped money promiscuously, and ran to the car with knees knocking.

"Dr. Corbin?" asked the officer, getting down from the seat.

"Yes. Where is—— Thanks!"

For he had handed me an envelope, on the back of which was scribbled:

CORBIN:

Gone to help Miss Cortlandt with her surprise party—she sent John with the car for me—says Wheeler has 'phoned he has got Sam and will bring him on the next boat.

LORIMER.

That Irishman in uniform looked to me like an angel of light, and since he explained that he ran risks by leaving his post around the corner I blushed when I offered him a small bank note. He touched his cap and went off thinking I was a plutocrat, while I got into the car and relaxed with happiness.

I looked around at the river-front scene and thought what a good world it was after all, for at least five minutes. Then the boat whistled as it started from the Jersey side, and I was reminded that Wheeler had still to meet the pale-eyed fiend at the gambling-place uptown. Also I had to get him up there to the house next door, to hear the conference with the Chief—if we were not too late. The boat sidled across the river with exasperating deliberation.

When the people began to come off, I held myself in the seat by main strength. I had started the engine, which was purring sweetly, and now I could only wait and strain my eyes. They were among the first—a handsome pair. I stood up and swung my hat.

"Dan! Sam! This way!" I was out and running to meet them.

Sam walked as he did when he was Class Marshal at Commencement, and his eyes glowed deep and dark, as if some wonderful happiness was his. The way he looked from me to Wheeler made my eyes smart as I wrung his hand. So I said:

"Get into that car. Think it's going to rain?"

"You were right, you two!" Sam's voice was low and deep and wobbly. "A man is never broke while he has such friends."

"The West's no place for a white man, anyhow!" Wheeler announced, as if there were no other subject under consideration. We all three understood from that instant that no further mention was to be made of the river. Dan was especially dry and business-like as he went on: "D'you see the Englishman? How'd he act?"

"He punched me in the jaw." I rubbed the sore place.

"Yes?" Wheeler stood very still. "What were *you* doing?"

"Me? Oh, I was sassy and needed it; but I don't like to be punched after I have turned side-on— Never mind! You're in a hurry. Get into that car!"

"Who's going to drive this wagon—you?"

Wheeler's suspicion was insulting. He is fussy about who drives the car he's in.

"I am going to drive this car—fast! Watch me!"

I got in and took the wheel, adding firmly—

"Get in behind!"

"Oh-h-h, no! Not Danny—not for a minute; don't think it! I'm too young to die!" Dan gave me one baleful glare and turned to Sam. "Can't you drive a car?"

"I never tried." Sam gave him one of his own rare smiles.

"Come, be a man, Dan!" I urged. "You and I have got to be in the woodchuck's hole over the White Room inside of half an hour. There's a row in the enemies' camp, and the Big Chief's coming to pow-wow! Hep up!"

"Go to it, then!" His teeth clicked. "But I sit right up in front, where I can look my finish in the face!" He got in with me. "Here's where we climb trees—give her the juice!"



"SAM," I called over my shoulder as I threw in the clutch, "you can say you have seen Dan Wheeler scared!"

"*Watch* out!" Dan shouted, bracing back as we skidded on the turn. "You keep your lamps on the road and your mind on your sins!"

"Now we've got a straight stretch, all

clear," I said, as I headed uptown. "Now about my little visit with the Englishman. He punched my jaw, as I was saying. I slept sweetly after that and waked up in the cellar next door with the Jap holding my head. He took me upstairs to peep through a hole, and the Englishman was telling Cameron how he had got the whole United States guessing. He has fooled us all from the start, it seems, by sheer intellect; and he will get you before morning. Meanwhile he has a burglary all ripe and ready, somewhere uptown. Know where it is?"

"Yeh—had it spotted a week—— *Look* out, man! The *woman*! THE WOMAN!" Dan shouted, stiff as a poker; then relaxed as we passed her.

"Phe-e-ew! It's all right, son! My turn will come some day, and you pay for this! Well—go on with your story. What about the second-story job?"

"Cameron couldn't stand for it—said he had orders not to allow it until 'Arry had fulfilled his part of the contract, and croaked a poor lollop called Wheeler. 'Arry said it was as good as done, and he must get at his job while it was ready. Cameron said only the Big Chief could call off the Inspector——"

"Croft?"

"Yes. 'Arry whispered something in Cameron's ear that gingered him up some thing scandalous; he went after the Chief on his toes, and I came after you."

"Good leather! So he's got the brain-drop on us all, and I get mine right away as soon as he has a minute to spare. Isn't that nice?"

Wheeler's tone sent a shiver through me; I could fairly feel the deadly emanation from him, a benumbing force that can not be described. He no longer saw the street ahead through those long, narrowed eyes. I shook off the chill and turned to Sam.

"Sam, orders are to deliver you at the Cortlandt mansion. Do you want to go to your rooms to prink?"

"There is nothing there but the empty rooms," said McLean cheerfully, "and I shall have to borrow carfare from Dan."

It was good to hear the warmth in the tone he used. Wheeler turned with a start.

"You'll find things at your rooms just as you left 'em. I told the Jap to lay out your evening clothes, and put in the studs. Now forget it—*for*-get it! Never mind what I knew—I got troubles enough of my own,

and more money than is good for me!"

"Dan Wheeler!" said I accusingly, "have you been having Sam shadowed? Before I introduced him to you?"

"Yes!" barked Wheeler. He was afraid of thanks. "Now keep your trap closed! I got use for him, and it's no hide off your back. Pull up here!"

CHAPTER XVIII

"YOU'RE NEXT."

WE HAD reached Sam's house; looking up at his windows I saw they were alight. He got out and held out his hand to Wheeler in silence; Wheeler took it and they exchanged a long, level look.

"When shall I see you?" Sam asked quietly.

"No telling—before long," Dan answered crisply. "So long!"

Sam shook hands with me, but did not try to speak, and went inside quickly.

As I turned the car around to circle the block and enter the vacant house the same way I had come out, I asked Wheeler—

"How long have you had your eye on Sam?"

"Quite a spell. Good lad! He may come in handy." He spoke with a finality that meant no more on that subject. But I wanted to ask other questions. I couldn't see what the girl was driving at, getting up a surprise party. After a pause I tried again.

"How do you size up this reception? And what is the news she has to tell Sam?"

"Doc, you're walking in your sleep." Wheeler slanted a look at me. "Put one and one together! This Barney person that lit out with the dough is no dead one—he's made a killing out there, sure. Your college chump, Sam, was born lucky—sticks out all over him. That's why I tied to him at sight. He wins big money on this throw—you hear me."

Although I knew his sordid motive was a pose, Wheeler's prophecies had a way of coming out right.

"I hope so. He deserves it. Did you ever see a man so unconscious of self?"

"M-hm! Wait till she gets her brand on him!" was Dan's cryptic comment. "Here's the place to leave the car."

But he spoke absent-mindedly, as if his thoughts were busy elsewhere, and as we

picked our way through the backyard route to the "adjoining basement" he was saying half to himself:

"Doc, this is too good a chance to lose. Brain-drop, eh? And you say the Englishman is superstitious— Sh-h! Not a word! I got her!" And I had trouble to keep up with him as he flitted ahead like a shadow and entered the basement.

We had hardly got inside when the Jap appeared with his flashlight, and Dan formally introduced him.

"Doc, make you acquainted with the Mikado. Mike, can you get me an envelope or letterhead with Cameron's name on it?"

"Sure-lee!" smiled the pleased little man. "Pick him up today!" And from his pocket he drew an empty used envelope bearing Cameron's address.

Splitting it open, Wheeler spread it on a box and wrote with my fountain pen all across the inside, tore it across and rolled each half into a tight cylinder. One he gave to the Jap.

"Go back to the roulette room and stick around where you can hear my buzzer. When I give one buzz, you knock at the White Room door and hand this in. Then you leave them for good and come with us. Get it? Tell it to me!"

The Jap was letter perfect.

"Good little man!" said Dan. "Come, Doc—we'll witness an audience of the Emperor of the Ring!"

During the short time we had to wait in the woodchuck hole over the White Room Dan explained how the trap worked. Originally he had intended it for a private exit in case of unannounced police raids, but he had found it useful in other ways; and it was known only to himself and the Mikado, who was a good mechanic and had done the work of installing it.

"They can poke from below all they like, so long as they don't close the door from the roulette room. That door closes the circuit and releases this bolt." He pointed it out. "But I didn't have to do even that, the other night—I had the Jap here with me. He knew and worked the safe combination, he had the trap open for me, and all I had to do was to climb the rope ladder with him on my heels—we had no time to spare at that! Here they come!"

Through the peep hole I saw the Big Chief of the Ring for the first time. There was no mistaking his leonine face—it had

glared from the front pages of all the papers—with the cold, fierce eyes of the beast that preys. He was in no pleasant mood as he stalked in after Cameron and took his seat opposite the waiting Englishman.

"Look here, you!" he began without salutation. "You have done nothing but grab and beef ever since you hit town. *Now* what's your holler?"

"I only ask what I was promised." The Englishman's restraint was evident.

"Well—make good, and you get yours!" the Boss snarled. "This Wheeler's a dangerous man, with a following behind him that we don't understand. How do I know you've got anything?"

"How do you mean?" asked 'Arry, frowning.

"I'll tell you what I'll do with you!" The Chief struck the table. "We have got to chance it—I will call off the Inspector from that beat and you can go to the job and get the diamonds. But it will raise a holler; and if you're caught with the goods, or don't down this Wheeler, you are a dead one! You will go up the river for a big stretch. Don't look to me for a valentine,* for I don't know you, never saw you. It'll be a lifer for yours!"

"Now I'll tell *you* something!" 'Arry was white and venomous. He stuck out his lean jaw and began to whisper. I heard "secret order"—"I *know*"—

"That'll be all of that! Searing tried that bluff, and it don't—" the Chief was roaring, when a knock sounded at the door from the roulette room and Cameron, standing guard there, hissed a warning that silenced the big man.

"Talk about luck!" Wheeler whispered in my ear, as we lay above looking and listening breathlessly. "This was made to order!" He poked his little paper cylinder down through the peep hole. It dropped on the table beneath, just as the conspirators were turning to look toward the door, where Cameron was receiving its counterpart handed in by the Jap, and lay there unnoticed. Cameron closed the door and came to the table unrolling the half envelope.

"What the— My name on one side of an old letter envelope, and on the other—"

He turned it over and read aloud:

"Yes—you tried it once before. Remember Jim Searing! If you want to know what happened to him—"

*Valentine.—Short sentence.

Here the Big Chief swore a hissing oath and snatched the paper.

"—! What's that—Searing?" His heavy face was mottled and his hand rattled the paper as he reread.

"—want to know what happened to him, look on the table—"

Already Cameron and the crook were staring, white-lipped, at the other rolled paper lying in the white light on the table between them. It was the Englishman who had the nerve to pick it up, unroll and read:

"Searing was armed, but I broke him with my hands. 'Arry the Toff, alias Henry Hooper, you're next. DAN WHEELER."

CHAPTER XIX

"NOW, DOC!"

THE room below was silent for a time while a man might breathe thrice.

Then the English crook tossed the paper on the table with a sniff of disdain. He was pale, nevertheless, shaken by the ghostly appearance from nowhere of the paper on the table. Even if it had been put there by one of the two men sitting before him, that would not account for the words about Searing, whom the Chief had just mentioned. Moreover, the Big Chief himself was palpably frightened.

Yet this Englishman, alarmed though he might be, was above all greedy and suspicious. His pale eyes still glittered.

"I told you you had spies here!" He gave an ugly look at Cameron, who was blue and shaky. "And how comes your name on the paper—it's your envelope."

"You — fool!" the Chief snarled with contempt—he was blotchy, purple. "He'd be a wise guy to stick his name on a phony letter, wouldn't he? I've had enough of your bulldozing—you're too rich for my blood.

"Now you listen here! You get your chance at your diamonds, see? And if you win you take your loot and your roll, and hit the high bumps for Merry Hengland soon as God'll let you! But if Wheeler gets you, I tell you right here I'll be glad of it—then I know I got a *man* to deal with. He'll hold us up for big money for any work he does, but it'll be done right and we'll have to stand for it. I've found out some things about him and you, and I tell you

to your face I'd feel safer looking at you through bars—that's my last word!"

"And my last word is this." 'Arry's eyes narrowed as they met the Old Tiger's viciously. "If I win, I go back to God's country; but if I lose, you never see your bad man Wheeler again!"

The conference broke up in this spirit of hostility. Up where we were Dan whispered:

"Yea, bo! But that holds you for a spell, just as hard! You'll see me—I'll be there. Oh-h, will I?"

The very air was thick with the fatal hate and killing-lust of strong men in whom the beast fires rage high. For in this there be men and men; one is but a dry husk that rustles low, while another is a gymnotus charged with a force to stun a horse by contact; and Wheeler was of these.

I followed Dan down to the basement where Mike waited. I was feeling sick. I did not want to see these men meet. The Englishman was of the Long John Silver type, hard and treacherous, and I feared Dan underrated him.

"Dan—" I interrupted his whispered instructions to the Jap, and my voice was hoarse—"pardon me for butting in, but this man 'Arry is no blundering windbag like Searing. Aunt Mary says he's invulnerable—never been scratched; he's downed the worst of the Apaches, knows explosives, dead shot with—"

He silenced me with a sudden frowning lift of his handsome, wicked head and a downward movement of his flat hand that made me shiver and shrink. I can see that hand now, white and smooth-tapering, silk and spring-steel, so horribly like a woman's hand, and alive! It may have been because I had seen that hand break the big breezy Searing and slowly carve the dread symbol on his live flesh—— But I want to forget that. . . .

Somehow I knew that that hand, which always seemed to caress what it touched, had a benumbing power in its contact—that a knife in it would not give so much pain as it cut through flesh and nerves, like the paralyzing gaze of the long green eyes. And its movements all had a treacherous flowing-smooth grace that hid their lightning-flash quickness. I sat on that box shivering, gooseflesh rippling up my spine, until Dan finished talking to the Jap and turned to me.

"Doc, did I ever give you the hot end yet?" The old question. I shook my head. He lightly touched my shoulder—I could hardly feel it.

"Cheer up—the worst is yet to come! Just a word with the Chief, in the street, and we take a nice ride. And—Mike will steer."

He never tried to be funny; but the look of fierce determination and assumed terror with which he finished was such a delightful thing under the circumstances, that I felt like cackling hysterically.

We came out on the cross street where we had left the car, and Mike took the wheel while I got in with Dan. Our start was timed so that we met the Chief in his car on the Avenue corner, and the Jap cut across so that the two cars came to a stop with the back seats even. I was looking into the leonine face so near I could touch it, but the Chief never saw me at all. Dan leaned forward and addressed him across me.

"Looking for me, Chief?" Their glances met and clashed like swords of honest foes.

"You're the man," the Chief growled. He lost no time in formalities. "We have coddled this English crook long enough—he's a white elephant; after tonight I don't know him. But it's you and him when you meet, and the best man wins. See? If he wins, he gets by with the diamonds and we pay him besides—there'll be a holler, but we got to stand for it. But if you win, he can serve his bit, or swim home; then you come to me, see? You and the Old Man used to do business."

"Yeh?" Dan narrowed his eyes, and his lips curled sardonically. "The Old Man came to me!" It was hardly more than a whisper.

Few men have seen the Chief blush. I am one. This meant surrender, almost.

"Well—what d'ye want?" He finally got it out.

"Not the diamonds." Dan never moved a muscle of his face. "That means no holler, and you win on that. We split that even—I take the roll that was to go to 'Arry, and I stand good in New York, as I did before. When you want any high-class sleuthing done, you come to me and we do business." Here Dan lowered his voice to an even murmur. "And when They want anything I come to you. Do I get it?"

"You get it," said the Chief instantly.

"You're a shark, but I hate a piker! Home, Jim!"

The gears crunched and we were off without a word of farewell.

"And he talks like that before witnesses!" I remarked.

"Hm!" Dan assented. "He's got a driver there that wouldn't dare hear a word, say nothing about beefing it; and he knows I don't bring any man that's not right." He was speaking absently, so I did not disturb his thoughts for some seconds.

A part of his conference with the Chief had been obscure to me. I understood, however, that the Chief had had his eyes opened to the fact that Dan in some mysterious way had influence that he could not accurately gauge—an influence that reached into dark places where he himself was helpless. Therefore, if the English crook failed to put Dan out of the way or render him harmless, he—the Chief—would be compelled to come to Dan's terms. That would mean that Sled Wheeler would still be the king of swell crookdom, in a better position than ever to "play the game," in his own words.

As for the money, I knew Dan already had enough and to spare, and he won it now as chips in the game—proofs of winning. What most concerned him, and therefore me, was the man-to-man proposition—the question of supremacy. The bare thought of his defeat was an impossible horror. I was getting keyed up, and I could feel something coming in his steadily increasing tension—his voltage of hostile, bristling virility was rapidly mounting. Absorbed in watching him, I was recalled to things by his looking up at the third-story windows of a house we were passing.

"He's on his way by now," said he; I saw it was at Sam's windows he was looking. We had gone twice around the block.

Then he pulled out his watch. "So is 'Arry—we might as well be moving up-town."

There was a flinty sound in his voice. We passed a street light, and in his eyes I saw the fatal glitter that came only when he was on a man trail, as he shot their gaze into mine.



"CORBIN! How's your nerve?"

It was a brisk query, but I was feeling sicker every instant. I had heard that note before—twice—and what had followed—!

"I want to go home," said I, in a small voice. "Dan, have I got to see that man broke? I—you know—he's got some devil's trick up his sleeve. He won't play the game. If he should get you——!" It was almost a whimper.

"Doc—" his hand on my knee was as lightly soft as a shy girl's caress—"are you thinking, by any chance, that that cur's going to get Dan Wheeler?"

His greenish eyes probed deep in mine, and I couldn't help shrinking from that hand.

"No!" I blurted. "But, Dan! I can see Searing now—his face as They led him off—took him away—whimpering!" I brushed my eyes.

"Son, when did you eat last?"

"At noon. But I can't eat a thing—can't swallow a mouthful!"

"I thought so." By one of those invisible lightning-smooth motions he had out his watch and put it back. "Just about time. Mike! Down that way, to Dent's."

In the cozily warm little restaurant Dan set me down at a table facing him. A beef sandwich and a cup of coffee were put before me, and Dan had a large glass of milk in his hand. The milk never even wavered in the glass as he sipped and set it down.

"You're not taking pills, doc! Chew until it tastes good!"

"Tastes like absorbent cotton!" I fluffed and blew dry crumbs, but stuck to it. He sipped slowly, keeping just abreast with me, and at last I finished.

"That's business!" he approved as we drained the last drop together. "Now you see why I need you—a man with the sense and sand to do what he's told and not put up a roar. Feel better?" He paid and got up.

"Yep!" I followed him to the car. "Probably I was full of fog, but it was the milk that braced me up."

I didn't have to tell him that I meant that the sight of his nerve was the stimulant I needed. The slight twitch of his thin lips—his nearest approach to a smile—showed his pleasure.

"Go up Park Avenue, Mike. No time to spare."

As we whirled through the cold night air I caught a look now and then at his profile. The very lines of his features were accented and deepened; the whole man, larger, more dynamic, was growing to a fearful figure—

the Sled Wheeler of impossible legend.

Shrunk into my corner of the car, feeling very young and small, I wanted badly to ask where we were going—what we were going to do. We passed Fifty-ninth Street on high speed.

"How much farther, Dan?" It sounded like a whine.

Slanting a slow look sidelong, he ground out sardonically:

"Yeh? Raise *my* hair skidding corners, will you? My turn now, doc!" He touched the Jap on the shoulder. "Down this street, Mike—stop in the middle of the block, on the dark side."

We swung westward and ran a long crosstown block. The silence was unbroken until the Park was in sight ahead; then we slowed up in shadow near the curb. Dan got out, whispering something to the driver, and held open the car door.

"Now, doc!"

CHAPTER XX

GUNPLAY

THE engine had stopped. The Jap was putting something in his pockets as he got down. I got to the sidewalk on twittery legs, so Dan took my arm.

"See that house?" He pointed to a big square gray-stone mansion on the corner facing the Park, standing apart, with a walled courtyard behind it. "We go into the alley to the courtyard door—that will be open—then into the basement by the rear door. Servants are all in Newport, and we go right up to the second floor where the Englishman's at work on the box.* See?"

"What? You mean to tell me——"

"Sh-h!" He clapped a hand over my mouth. "Don't tell 'Arry all about it. It's the best place in the city tonight for our little debate—'Arry the Toff and I can have a 'eart-to-'eart chat with nobody butting in. He's had it all arranged so no bull will interrupt. We'll see how he works his lone-hand box-opening act!"

"But wh-what if my shoes squeak?" I gasped.

"They don't!" snapped Dan. "And you don't walk up my back, either, going upstairs. If you fall over your feet, somebody gets drilled. Doc, you go up those stairs like the ghost of your grandmother's cat—see?"

*Box.—Box safe.

"But wh-what you going to do?" I stammered.

"Beat him at his own pussy-foot game, and take little 'Arry's playthings away!" said Wheeler grimly. "They say he acts real naughty if you do that!"

"But you haven't got a gun," I whimpered. "Not a darn thing."

"Senough!" He made a quick, silencing gesture. "Hep up, doc! Hay-foot—straw-foot!"

Like shadows we crept to the little alley, along the courtyard wall and through its narrow door. The paved back yard was bare; across it we went in single file—Dan leading and the Jap behind, so I was boxed—and into a basement door. Here Dan flashed a pocket light.

We were in a warm furnace room, glistening like the engine room of a steamboat. From there an open door let us into a tiled laundry.

"Here's the stairs—this is too easy!" Dan held us back. "He works without any outside man—he's gotta have some kind of——"

He was flashing his light over every inch of the bottom stairs.

"Yah! I gotcha! Neat and tidy!"

He pointed to a slender thread crossing the stairway, running through a tiny screw ring and then upward, its end made fast to the opposite post by a lump of hard wax. Making the thread fast to the ring by a pinch and a half hitch, Dan snapped the cross thread as he softly commented:

"A little thing, *but*—— Who is it says there are no *little* things, doc?"

He was perfectly at home and comfortable, but my brains were a hopeless muddle—my thoughts in a chaos of fears. I did not know where we were, nor why we were there. It was all a blurred nightmare, and I followed him dumbly, trying to keep myself from stampeding.

"Now we'll go upstairs and burgle the burglar!"

Dan flitted upward and we followed, holding our breath. At the top we found ourselves in a butler's pantry. From somewhere in the front of the house came the rich tones of a piano, muffled by doors and distance. Dan listened.

"Dancing in there." He tilted his head. "Want to join 'em, doc?"

"I hope you're enjoying yourself!" I whispered hoarsely. "Keep it up!"

"Too much imagination—comes of a college education!" he commented dryly. "You'll be a lot worse before you get better, at that!"

One more upward flight of back stairs, and we were in a sort of sewing-room or linen room.

"This is your place, Mike. You know your job."

The Jap nodded, and took his stand at the foot of the next flight. Wheeler first peered from a door at the front of the room, then swung it wide and beckoned to me to come with him.

I stepped out, blinking, into the mellow-lighted hall. At one step we had entered the luxury of a palace. On each side the open doors showed bedroom suites, all soft richness, harmony of tints, comfort to the *n*th power; the very air, faint-scented and athrob with distant music, caressed every sense.

Passing along the hallway to where it turned at a right angle, we looked down the broad sweep of the grand staircase to the main entrance hall. It was oddly familiar in its regal beauty—paintings, statuary, tapestry and art objects—like pictures of foreign travel. While I was drinking it in, Dan was detaching from the stair head an alarm thread like the one in the basement.

"They're all in that drawing-room at the left." He indicated the open door below, from which came the music and the sound of young voices. "Not another soul in the house but the gentleman from London. He's just got to work on the wall safe in there—second room of that suite."

He pointed to a door at the left of the front arm of the hall in which we stood. Though not a feature of his face altered, I could feel the man bristle. Before me came again the scene in that other upstairs room, when Wheeler had manhandled another dangerous enemy—big, breezy Searing—and made of him a whimpering child. I could see what was going to happen in this room close at hand, and the contrast with the music and laughing voices below stairs was too cruel.

"Dan!" I made a last appeal. "That man is no blundering blowhard, like Searing. Aunt Mary has told me how he has downed the worst fiends on the Continent and come off without a scratch. He's a devil without bowels, always ready—and he's got a gun, Maxim-silenced!"

"You will be no earthly good to me or

anybody," said he slowly—and his tawny eyes looked deep in mine—"as long as that gun is on your mind. I can see that sticking out! Come!" He beckoned me to follow.

It was no traditional burglar scene that I saw in that royal chamber. There was no mask nor dark lantern. We stood in the big front room in full light, and looked through an open door into a white-and-gold bedchamber where 'Arry was feeling out the combination of a safe set into the wall. All this time he had been perfecting his preparations, laying his alarm threads and mapping out exits. In faultless attire, there was nothing in the kneeling figure before the safe to show that he was not the rightful owner—except the big blued revolver lying on the floor ready to hand. Fitted with a silencer, it was too awkward for a pocket, but still more treacherous and deadly than without the Maxim appliance.

Drawing me aside, out of range of the door, Dan unlaced his shoes and slipped out of them. The noises from below came faint, but enough to cover a whisper.

"Here! Hold my coat and hat. Now, doc—" Wheeler's grim visage took on little quizzical wrinkles as he hitched up his trousers with a comic shrug—"if you believe in faith cure, just think there's no such thing as a creaky board in that floor. Looks like a long ways to that gat, what? But you won't be happy till I get it! S-st! We're off!"

For, peering around the door jamb, he saw that the cracksman had just fixed a suction stethoscope to the safe door and placed the ear pieces in his ears. As he turned the knob slowly and listened for the drop of the tumblers, Wheeler flitted wraith-like across the polished floor and skin rugs.



RECKLESSLY foolhardy it looked to me, who had expected a slow crawling advance, to see his swift dash for the gun. But with my heart in my mouth, I couldn't help a surge of admiration at the catlike grace with which he pounced upon the revolver, sprang away with a rebounding leap and was back at my side in the time it takes in the telling.

"Just like that!" He handed me the weapon as he whispered. "Score one for Dan!"

He was in his shoes and had them laced while I drew breath in relief. "Feel better? My coat!" He stood up. "Now come back

to that room at the top of the stairs—that's your post if you don't want to see us meet." He hurried me before him, and when we were seated in the Turkish den gave me instructions.

"Here is your job—you stay here and keep those kids below from interrupting me, while I take away the million-dollar necklace and things from 'Arry and slap his wrist. The harder he separates, the worse for him! Don't be too brash about it—if anybody comes in here, get into that curtained alcove and lie low, but don't let 'em come down the hall and butt in on us. If anybody does get past you, pull that cord of 'Arry's. I don't want to get landed for this job—shan't be, if I make good—but you heard the name of the flatfoot in charge of this precinct?"

"Inspector Croft?"

"The same. Does that name remind you of anything?"

"No—wait! Is he the cop you thumped in the theater years ago?"

"Is he? Ask him! Look at the scar under his eye—it would be nuts for him to get me a life stretch. That's one reason why I don't care to be annoyed—see?"

"I think so. If you were arrested it would mean a long term; but in my case it would be only a valentine for a first offense. You know I don't mind, if——"

"In *your* case?" Wheeler had stood up to go, but he snapped me up viciously. "In *your*—— See here, doc! Some day you will drive me to the bughouse. Now, do you think I'm framing up a——" He gave it up, and waved his hands over his head helplessly.

"Certainly not," said I. "I know you wouldn't get me in bad intentionally; but if it's to be you or me——"

"Doc——" Dan shook his head—"I'm going back there and get a decision with 'Arry, to take the strain off my nerves! If I stay here any longer you'll have me down for the count. Give me the gun." And he went.

Now what did he mean by that?

It was not long before I found out. I had hardly seated myself in the den where I could look through the portières down into the entrance hall below when the front door-bell rang. The music in the drawing-room stopped, and a fresh sweet voice called out, "Mr. Lorimer, the servants are all out; won't you answer the door?"

Out pranced Lorimer, in evening dress; he opened the door, and there stood Sam McLeod!

Until that moment I had never suspected what house we were in. They came straight up the stairs, and I shook off my paralysis enough to get into the curtained alcove before they entered the den.

"Take off your bunnit and shawl, Sam," Lorimer was saying. "And wait right here a minute—Miss Joan wants to speak to you, first of all."

"First of all? Am I holding audience——" Sam began, but was left talking to the empty doorway.

He had just time to swing off his Inverness before a vision filled that doorway—a vision in scarlet, all aglow with life and unconscious beauty—the kind of beauty that gets to you until it makes your breath hurt. I could see Sam go white at sight of her.

"Why were you so long, Mr. McLeod?" she asked with demure coolness.

"I had to dress, and I walked. Did you really want—want to see me?"

"Certainly not. Why should I? But I have a message for you—a message you ought to have before you start for the West. That was why I had you stopped; it was a matter of no importance to me." The long dark lashes were lowered haughtily.

"Yes? And the message?" Sam bit his lip and spoke distinctly. But his shirt front rose and fell faster than normal.

"Merely a business matter—from your partner who ran off with the money you paid him for his shares—— I can't do it!" Suddenly a brilliant smile broke through the mask of cold hauteur. "I had a perfectly proper speech all made up, but—— Here is his telegram. Read it, quick!"

Her outburst of generous eagerness and sympathy was such a surprise that Sam held the yellow telegram she had torn from her corsage as if he had no interest in it, and stared at her—held the paper before him and looked and looked, in his deep-set eyes a savage tenderness that made her breath come faster——

"Read it—*read!*" She stamped a fascinating, scarlet-shod foot. Sam drew a big breath and tore his eyes from her. He read:

We win. Syndicate offers two million cash. Tell Sam wire acceptance within twenty-four hours.

"*Your* mine—don't you see?" She explained. "That was why Barney ran off——"

he had to hurry to get options extended, or something; and that was our conspiracy! That was why we didn't want you to know, so you'd not be disappointed—and I'm so glad, for Barney! Why don't you say something?"

"It was—like you, and Barney!" Sam, white about the mouth, went on bravely. "Now you will announce your engagement?"

"Barney will, you mean! Yes—arent you glad for him? He will go right on to Los Angeles to tell Margaret, and bring her back with him——"

"Joan! What—— Say that again!"

Sam's fierceness as he sprang toward the girl frightened her; and then she drew herself up.

"Mr. McLeod! Aren't you forgetting——"

"I beg your pardon!" Sam bowed low. "I was—I am forgetting. I am an old fool. But you had been so good to me, I hoped that a bit of your sweet kindness was more than charity—— No fool like an old fool! Forgive—a man almost old enough to——"

"Stop that!" Again she stamped her foot. "You old! Not thirty, and I hate boys! Sometimes I think——" She drew back to the door, eyes down because they could not yet stand the glow of his; then looked up demurely. "Sometimes I have thought you too young—and timid—Sam!"

"Joan!" he gasped, and advanced; then stopped at the uptilt of her dimpled chin.

"Don't go yet!" he pleaded. "One instant! In pity, tell me—have I a chance? Just a chance?"

"Not a chance!" With an insolent wave of round white arm and hand, and head thrown back, she stepped back through the portières. Then, bare neck and shoulders through the dark curtains, she leaned in to whisper with finger to red lip—

"Not a chance, Sam—a certainty!"

She was gone; running down the stairs and calling clearly:

"Yes—yes! Coming!"

Sam stood for a moment petrified, looked about the small room to make sure things were real; and his look was that of a man glorified and exalted until he was awed by his own happiness. The yellow paper in his hand still held her fragrance; he pressed it to his face and lips.

While the music from below came to

him soft and cadenced, he slowly turned his face heavenward, as if in silent, reverent thankfulness. His lips moved as if in a prayer of thanksgiving. For the first time I felt that I was a spy, as if I ought not to be seeing this, and turned away my eyes.



BANG!

A savage report rang down the hall, and it came from the room where Dan had gone. Followed an instant of hush and horror.

Tearing through the numbness that wrapped me like a blanket, I rushed from the alcove, blindly colliding with Sam. He held me fast.

"Corbin! What's this? Where——"

"Burglar!" I gasped. "After the diamonds in there! Let me go! Wheeler——"

"Sam! Oh, thank Heaven!" The girl stood in the door, one hand to her breast. "What was that? I thought——"

"Keep her back!" I hissed in Sam's ear as I broke away. "And don't let anybody come from down there!"

"They didn't hear—they're singing," I heard her say, as I rushed down the hall and left them together in the little Turkish room.

The gun Dan captured couldn't make that noise. Could it be the fiend at the safe had—— No further thoughts would come. In panic apprehension I reached the open door, staggered back as if struck in the face by what I saw, and ran to help.

It was Dan. Alone he lay on the floor of the inner room—I saw his grizzled hair. He was getting up! He lurched to his feet as I rushed to him—he reeled toward me, hands outstretched, groping weakly, and dark blood streamed down his face from a hole in his forehead.

"Dan, old man! Dan!" I sobbed, as I caught him in my arms. "We'll fix it—it's all right!" I held my handkerchief to his head.

"Nother gun—had 'nother gun," he muttered thickly. "Got me—jus' creased—that's all!" He kept sagging and stiffening alternately.

"Come in here, Dan. Let's see!"

I drew him toward the tiled bathroom at the right, but he suddenly stiffened back.

"Whup! Don' let'm out! 'S in there!" He pointed vaguely toward two doors at the rear. "'Ll fix'm 'n a minute!" He ground his teeth.

"He's gone, Dan. Let him go—he isn't worth it." I saw a corner couch.

"What's this?" McLeod's horrified face appeared at my shoulder. "Wheeler? How did it happen? Ee-e-u!"

He drew a whistling breath through his teeth, as I shifted the handkerchief and he saw the wound. He caught Dan on the other side and helped me lift him as tenderly as a woman. "Let us lift you, old hoss. Joan, we owe this man everything, more than you'll ever guess. We must put him to bed right here!" He spoke to the girl beside him.

"Bed?" Dan's eyes flew open, and in them came the hard, tawny flare. "Not till I get him. Guard that door!"

He spoke with his own incisive snap, revived by the cold water on his head. For the girl had got busy while Sam talked, and had a basin of water, towels and bandages. While she helped me deftly with the bandaging she asked quietly—

"We'll see to it—which door?" And she wet Dan's lips, wiping away the blood.

"Door to roof—I got 'im trapped—can't get out!" Wheeler relaxed, and held out the silenced Colt, which he had never let go. "Take this gun—find other on the floor."

And he let us lay him on the couch in the corner.

"Is he raving?" Sam whispered. "What's it all about?"

"Arry the Toff was opening the safe to get the jewels." I obeyed the command in Wheeler's single glance, and explained. "Dan was waiting to take them away from him and restore them, but the Englishman must have shot him and made his getaway with the diamonds—the safe is open and empty."

Meantime in the better light I was lifting the dressing and examining the wound.

"Dan!" I exploded, and clapped him on the shoulder. "You were right! It didn't bore the skull—just plowed it and came out above the hair line!"

"Sure! Send Mike up here—he's got some heathen booze that will fix me all right. Here's your diamonds." He carelessly handed out a small jewel case.

"You got—how the——" I was gasping, when Dan went on with eyes closed:

"Had the drop on him and made him dig up. Then sent him—the wrong door."

Although he spoke more distinctly all the

time, he was plainly saving his strength. We held our breath, and he went on. "I got careless. He turned, pulled another gun; we fired together. I knocked gun out of his hand; he got me and fell into my trap—'tend to him, presen'ly!" And he lay back drowsily.

Sam and I were puzzled, but the girl explained eagerly.

"I see it! Those two doors side by side! The burglar had left the right-hand one open—it goes downstairs. Wheeler closed it and opened the other that leads to the roof, and there's no way off but to jump!"

"Tha's right!" said Wheeler. "He gave up too easy—got another word to say to him presen'ly! Hello, Mike! Gimme some—your poison!"

The Jap had appeared of his own accord, his faithful, doglike eyes seeing only Wheeler; and he instantly held to the wounded man's lips a little bottle of clear liquid. Wheeler drank and seemed to sleep at once. The Oriental's eyes never left Dan's face; he squatted on the floor by the head of the couch, chin sunk in hands, and became a wooden image.

CHAPTER XXI

CORNERED

SILENCE filled the room for the count of ten, while we questioned one another with troubled looks. Sam then took the silenced Colt, put the jewel case in his pocket and tiptoed to the door, whispering:

"He wants this door watched, and watched it is, if that's all I can do for him. I'd rather have been shot myself."

"Seems as if we ought to do something if that fiend is on the roof. Can he get off?" I asked the girl in the same low tone.

"No. Impossible. But what does he mean—about giving up too easy?"

"The diamonds are worth—half a million? And Dan told me once that this English crook 'would be cut to mincemeat before he'd jar loose; once 'he got his hooks in the oof.' It's a big booty to let go."

"I'd no idea mother paid so much—she gave them to me. Was it half a million, Sam?"

"Must have been, nearly," Sam nodded. "I got almost that much from Isaacson, the dealer."

"I wish we could do something!" She

looked at Wheeler with eyes that were dewy. "He's done so much for us!"

She and Sam exchanged a look such as only new lovers know.

There sounded steps on the back stairs, and a boyish voice harsh with excitement:

"This way, Inspector—down this hall. They can't get out——"

Jack Cortlandt's pug-nosed, frowning visage appeared in the door that opened near where Sam sat.

"Here they are—the whole bunch. I told you they'd be after those diamonds. What're you doing, here with these crooks, young lady?"

"Sh-h! Jack, don't be dramatic—you'll only look foolish. Run away and play!" Miss Joan frowned and spoke with sisterly frankness.

Inspector Croft stepped into the room in full uniform—a bulbous-nosed and corpulent officer with the close, beady eyes of a machine-made politician. While the boy, who had dragged him in against his will, scowled at us all impartially, the Inspector's shifty glance shot to Wheeler's sleeping face with a spark of triumph, then became submissive as he addressed the millionairess:

"I'm afraid we shall have to look into this, Miss Cortlandt. The lower doors have been forced. How about the jewels?"

"The safe's open!" rasped young Cortlandt. "What're you doing with that gun, McLeod? And how about this one?" He picked up a nicked weapon from the corner behind the door. "Search 'em, Inspector—they've got the goods on 'em somewhere!"

Relishing his important rôle, he advanced threateningly.

"You know yourself, Croft, that this Wheeler's the most dangerous man there is anywhere! McLeod's been chummy with him, and *he* needs money bad enough to do anything. Run 'em both in—search 'em now!"

"Jack Cortlandt! Won't some *man* be so kind as to suppress that youth?" Miss Joan asked with desperate calm.

The little Jap had quietly shifted his squatting position on the floor so that he faced the enemy. Now he fished up from his collar in the back a long, wavy knife and lovingly felt its edge with his thumb nail. Wheeler breathed like a baby.

"Your brother is of age, Miss Cortlandt," said the Inspector, "and if he makes charges

against this man Wheeler, it will be my duty under the circumstances——"

But he saw the wriggly blade, and the call of duty came fainter. Inspector Croft paused; McLeod stepped in front of him.

"Inspector, this man Wheeler saved the jewels; took them from the burglar who forced the doors and opened the safe. That is how he was hurt. He gave them to me, to put them where they belong. If it had not been for his cool courage the diamonds would have been on their way to some 'fence' now. Here they are!"

"Yeh? How do I know you were going to return them?" The Inspector now sneered openly. He had heard McLeod had lost all his money, so he was no longer of the nobility. "Looks to me like a frame-up. Mr. Cortlandt, are these all the—— What the——"

He had opened the case, and now interrupted himself to take the necklace to a wall light. He held it up to examine it against his sleeve. The gems flashed and flared while we watched and held ourselves taut.

"*Mister McLeod, and Mister Wheeler!*" He swung around in triumph. "I am afraid these won't help your case any. These——" he held them high for dramatic effect—"these diamonds, gentlemen, are paste!"



NOW sure of his revenge, he took no pains to hide his enjoyment.

"I know a thing or two about diamonds, and I can swear these are imitations—good ones, and platinum-set, but imitations just the same. It's an old game, to delay discovery—to replace stolen gems with imitations no man but an expert can detect.

"That's why I am on this job; and a good thing I was, or the diamonds might be across the water and recut before you found you had been robbed." (This to Miss Cortlandt, with whom he had no doubt he was making a great hit.) "And now, Sled Wheeler, here's where you go up the river to stay. Quit this phony sleep business, and come along quietly; you'll get plenty of sleep in Sing Sing. Mr. McLeod may not stay so long——"

"Pardon me for interrupting your speech, Inspector," Sam broke in quietly. He had taken a closer look at the jewels, and now seemed relieved. "I can explain this matter, and at the same time answer another

riddle that has been puzzling the gossips. Those diamonds—"are paste. I know, for I owned them for twenty years, as well as the originals. My mother died when I was a kid and left me nothing but the famous Willing diamonds and this duplicate set of pastes. The pastes she wore most often, as is quite commonly done, for peace of mind; so she charged me to sell the originals in case of dire need, but to keep the imitations for her sake.

"The dire need came a few weeks back. I sold the originals to stave off bankruptcy, but the pastes I had kept in a locked box until three days ago, when they were stolen—no doubt by the man who has the originals now, with the intention of playing the game the Inspector has mentioned. When Wheeler got the drop on him he gave up the imitations. He still has the diamonds."

"*That's* what Dan meant!" I startled them all by smacking my fist into my hand. "The Englishman 'gave up too easy,' because he was making his getaway with the real gems! Lucky Dan's got him treed up on the roof!"

I turned to the boy.

"But you see here, Jack Cortlandt; you've heard the truth from Sam McLeod. Have you any real sporting blood in your neck? You used to have!"

One of the ugliest two-footed beings that ever walked, Jack could always take his medicine like a man, even when I taught him geometry and boxing. He was no fool, moreover. His small, black eyes snapped now.

"I'd deserve one of those good old lickings if I didn't own up." He came forward. "It's one on me, McLeod! Will you shake and call it off?"

"One condition!" said Sam gravely.

"Good Lord! You're welcome to her! . . . But I pity you. If you can make her behave you can beat this family!" He grinned and slanted a shamefaced look at his lovely sister, who was unconscious of his existence.

"This is all very well, but it won't go in court!" Inspector Croft felt that his dignity had been trifled with. He now dropped into the conversation like a ton of coal. "The diamonds are still to be produced, and the man who got them, if he exists!" His small eyes were cunningly suspicious.

"See here, you Croft!" Jack never required a moment's notice to start some-

thing. "Sam McLeod doesn't lie! You get the wrong man on this hunt, and your middle name is Flivver. There's a good man hungry for your job. The way not to get into trouble is to keep out!"

"Too late for that, now we're in; and we got to swim out." Croft was dogged. "And I got my orders about that necklace. Somebody's got to come across. How do I know this other man isn't in the frame-up—that he isn't the 'wire' in this 'swell mob'?"

Apologetically he turned to Sam, who evidently had shifted caste again by his betrothal, and was not to be treated lightly.

"This man Wheeler is a devil. He may have put one over on you, Mr. McLeod!"

"I'll stake my life he hasn't," Sam said evenly. "And my life is his without asking, any time at all."

"How do you get up on the roof?" Croft dodged emotions beyond his depth, and turned to the girl. "Let's see if there's anybody there!"

"This way!" Miss Joan walked to a closed door.

"Here!" Jack shouted. "Come back! Sam, show your authority!"

He started after her, but she had reached the door and now looked back with hand on knob. I can see her bright look now, as she called to Sam over her shoulder:

"I'll just show the way and turn on the roof light. No man would harm a girl. Come— *Ah-h!*"

A strangled shriek as the door opened and she was snatched through by a noose, snapped around her white neck from within. The door slammed, the lock rattled. Heavy scuffling on the stairs and another stifled cry meant she was being dragged up to the roof. We four men struck the door in a futile jam—

"Back! Stand back and give us room!" I panted. "Here, Sam—catch hold. Now then, together, and hit the line low!"

With a running start Sam and I struck the door side by side; drove it splintering from its hinges; all four of us swarmed over one another up the stairs.

"Around that way—up the next flight before he shuts the trap door!" Jack shouted, as he stopped to press the button that lighted the roof. Up the steep stairs we charged, Sam in the lead, to the flat graveled roof; and what we saw in the white electric light brought us up standing.

 THE Englishman seemed to tower gigantic. One hand held the wrist of the girl, who sat at his feet. The other arm was raised on high like the Statue of Liberty.

"Stop w'ere you are!" boomed his heavy chest tones. "Come near, and we go up in a spatter!"

I got Sam by the coat just in time to keep him from a leap at the Englishman's throat.

"Hold up, man!" I hissed in his ear. "D'you want to blow us to atoms? There's 'soup' enough in that bottle he's got to wreck the whole block. Look! Look at his hand!"

He looked where all our bulging eyes were staring, at 'Arry's upraised right hand. It held a long slender bottle of white liquid, and winding gracefully around it in a flaming spiral was the gorgeous diamond necklace!

With the Englishman's every panting breath each jewel flashed and glittered against the dark sky, shooting its rainbow lights, a mocking symbol of man's ugliest passion.

In that one hand the crook held his future's fortune and the lives of all of us, the lives of the revelers below, in the king's ransom necklace and the bottle of annihilation.

And he was at bay, desperate; in his pale, inhuman eyes shone the exaltation of despair, of unreasoning, relentless purpose. He showed his teeth in a snarl of beast hate as he growled:

"Now I got you, you bleeding fools! Make a move, one of you, and they'll never find a button of the lot of us! Drop the bottle? Will I? Ask that blockhead doctor there—he knows!"

I knew. I recalled what the Chief had said. He had "no use for the loser," but if 'Arry made away with Wheeler, the Chief would help him to get away with the necklace—and the Chief could do it. Once out of our reach with the diamonds and the Englishman would be safe, but if he were taken now it would mean a life sentence. I believed he'd drop that bottle, but I'd not play his game for him.

"Yah! I've croaked your biggest 'gun,' Sled Wheeler!" he taunted me. "But give me the necklace and your word of honor not to follow—all of you—and I let the girl go when I leave the house. Refuse, and I drop the bottle—it's a ten-nitroglycerin-

power. Tell 'em, you pill pedler, will I drop the bottle?"

Still I pressed my lips tight. The crook gave the girl's wrist a wicked twist.

"Speak up, you —! Tell 'em what you know!"

At a stifled moan from the girl I caught Sam and Jack in either hand.

"Wait, Sam! And you—you dirty crook—quit that! Stand still, everybody!" I barked. "Yes, he will do it, I believe. Coward as he is, he will blow us all up with himself rather than rot in prison. I believe I would myself!" I finished sullenly.

"Aye, so you would! You're none so big a fool as you look!" said 'Arry, with triumph in his clipped enunciation. "Now, gen'lemen—your word that I am not to be followed, an' all of us are 'appy! I tike the lidy only so far as your back door, as a 'ostage like, and we say good-by. Is it a go? Is it?"

Here the girl took her hands from her face and spoke with quiet courage.

"Let the necklace go and end this! Please, Sam! For my sake give your promise—a written release—anything!"

"That's the w'y to talk—we're coming on!" The Englishman's jocosity was more disgusting than his snarling threats.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MAN-TAMER

GROTESQUELY impossible though it seemed, there was no other way out. There was no reason for further hesitation, except that our fingers were all itching for the throat of that felon, and it was hard to give in. I thought of Dan, lying unconscious downstairs, a pale image of his splendid manhood—and that he had been brought down by this cur—

"My arm is getting tired, gen'lemen!" The Englishman's voice had a harsh rasp. "I don't— Hal!"

His mouth dropped open with an involuntary gasp, and his pale eyes stared behind us. We jerked around, nerves on edge, and saw a gruesome apparition.

From the trap door rose a head—the powerful, predatory head and face of Wheeler—turbaned, marble-still and pale; the green eyes glittered fiercely, and fixed their tawny steady gaze upon the Englishman with a malevolence to shrivel the heart in a man.

Dan Wheeler's face, remember, seen even on the street at high noon, gave the beholder a jolt by reason of the man-power in it. When he was aroused, the few men who had looked him in the face and survived never forgot it. And as we saw it slowly rising through the roof that night, it had a compelling force that was superhuman—demoniacal.

Cold chills rippling up our backs, we watched it rise, not with the jerky lift of a man stepping upward, but with the slow, relentless and inevitable advance of a mighty hydraulic jack. The effect was terrifying.

Now the body was in sight, firmly erect as a statue. The unwavering flare of the tiger eyes never left the Englishman for an instant, and the whole man radiated his own wonderful virility, unimpaired and triumphant. It was no forced appearance, not will power conquering pain and weakness, but the expression of conscious power—merciless, exulting.

'Arry's mouth dropped open wider. His pale eyes bulged and his nerveless left hand let go the girl's wrist. She fled to Sam, who circled her with a protecting arm. Still not one of us took our eyes off the figure of avenging power that was rising through the trap. The silence became agony.

At last the apparition was complete. When it set foot on the roof and took three characteristic swift-gliding steps toward the Englishman, 'Arry's strained nerves gave way. He straightened up with a rigid jerk and shrieked:

"Back! Back! Stop there! Step over that handkerchief and you never step again!"

His stiff right arm held bottle and necklace higher. His trembling left forefinger pointed to a lace handkerchief dropped by the girl. It lay at Wheeler's feet. Without an instant's hesitation Wheeler bent and swept it up.

"One more step and I drop it!" 'Arry's high voice cracked with superstitious terror. "Man or demon, you never lay hand on me! I know what came to Searing—STOP!" he yelled in a high shriek.

Standing still in the same ghastly silence, Wheeler raised aloft the handkerchief, held in his right hand as the Englishman held the bottle. Slowly his left hand came up across his body, forefinger extended, until it pointed to the handkerchief, held high in

the right—then remained motionless, steadily pointing.

The Englishman's hypnotized gaze obeyed the gesture, came up to the hand that held the lace trifle, and clung there, tense and fearful—afraid of what?

I could see 'Arry's hand clutch the bottle tighter, in subconscious imitation of the hand he watched.

Every inch of Wheeler spelled intense purpose and determination. What was coming?

My heart gave a flop as I saw Dan was slowly sliding nearer. His left foot was doing a slow "ghost waggle," while 'Arry's eyes were upturned on the handkerchief. Would he try a spring for the bottle? One rough shake would spray all of us over Manhattan!

May no man ever have to live through such a minute again. It seemed an hour. Dan's hand began to clutch, then loosen, rhythmically on the handkerchief—slowly, repeatedly—until Arry's hand did the same on the bottle, obeying the suggestion. Wheeler was within leaping-distance. . . .

Then it came—lightning from the blue. It makes one gasp to tell it.

Wheeler's hand clutched again—'Arry's with it—then flew wide open as he let fall the lace, shot out his head and bel-
lowed—

"DROP IT!"

'Arry's hand flew open with an unconscious jerk. Bottle and necklace fell.

A loud in-drawn gasp broke from us all—a gasp that was a yell—as we recoiled. Some one sobbed, "—!" Then the awful bursting roar. . . .



BUT it didn't come! Strained to the limit of endurance, I opened my eyes in time to see Wheeler, almost prone on his face, catch the bottle and necklace within a foot of the surface of the roof—and with one hand!

The other hand was on the roof, for he had dived forward almost flat to get under the falling bottle of crashing doom, and to have all the time possible. As he caught it in one hand with the sagging, yielding catch of the old-school bare-hand ball player, he threw himself up erect from his supporting arm and made a light panther leap backward, well out of 'Arry's reach—a marvelous muscular feat in itself.

"Not bad. Not at all bad, for an old

has-been," said Dan, as he daintily unwound the flashing necklace from the bottle, with the tail of his eye meanwhile on the collapsed Englishman. Then in a voice low but richly vibrant with deep enjoyment, he added:

"Oh, you Englishman! You and your brain-drop—what?" It was heart-warming to hear him.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," said Dan, as with an upward hitch of his cuffs he held his arms out from his sides and flopped his elbows once like a sleight-of-hand artist, "having finished this interesting experiment, we return necklace and handkerchief to the lady. And that, ladies and gentlemen, concludes our evening's entertainment!"

He handed jewels and lace to the girl with a bow.

Oh, but Dan was living—having more fun than Micawber reading his document!

He turned from us toward the trap door.

"Mike!" The Jap popped up like a devil in pantomime. "Take this bottle to the bathroom, gently remove the cork, and pour this soup carefully into a tub of lukewarm water—not cold or hot. Understand?"

As he gave the Jap the bottle and benignly patted him on the head, his face suddenly flashed into a wicked snarl:

"Yah! *Would* you? I was watching for that!"

And with the words he swung a lightning left uppercut that caught the desperately lunging Englishman full on the mouth, just as the latter made a dive at the bottle and strove to dash it to the roof. The blow snapped 'Arry's head up and stopped him.

The Jap vanished with the bottle just as 'Arry came back at Dan, showing all his teeth. It was such a furious blind rush that Wheeler didn't deign to use any of his more artful tricks. He simply sidestepped as he whipped a sweet right uppercut—this time to the chin. 'Arry threw up his hands and dropped flat on his back, arms out in the form of a cross, where he slept peacefully with dark blood oozing slowly from his mouth.

"Gad—what a beast!"

It was Sam who first spoke, frowning down at the Englishman.

Now that the bottle was gone, we all let ourselves down on the flat of our feet, filled our lungs once more with real New York air,

and looked upon the world and found it good.

"Can't he be taken away?" asked the girl, who had stood it all bravely. She was looking at Dan with fearful admiration. I added my appeal:

"Please, Dan! He's got his. He's broke. Let him go."

"One minute!" He stepped to the Englishman, who was waking up to find himself already handcuffed to the Inspector by one wrist. Dan's lips were merciless. "You 'Arry! Is there any other game you play better? D'you— Why, you yellow pup!" He turned away in disgust, murmuring, "Yellow—yellow, all through!"

For the Englishman had cringed from him, then darted away around the officer to the handcuff's extreme length, just like a frightened monkey on a chain when threatened by a cruel master. It was in his face, too—just the monkey's utter, wide-eyed, shameless terror; a horrible thing to see. I shall never be able to forget that either. It is so I always think of the Englishman—just as I remember Searing whimpering—as he looked trying to get away from Dan there on the roof.

Wheeler wasted no more time on him. He turned to the Inspector.

"Croft, if you will 'phone Headquarters that Dan Wheeler wins, you will hear something—"

"I heard it already," said Croft. "The Boss himself told me before I come here—called me up and put me wise. What'll I do with this?" He shook his cuff without a look at his captive.

That was another moment for Dan! He was in his old place already. I could see the flush of inward delight tint his face and neck, but he turned away coolly.

"Send him back where he came from and take him away." The officer instantly obeyed.

"And Dan!" Croft called, red with embarrassment. "I want to say I got no kick either, pers'n'ly. I got to hand it to you—that was a corkin' piece o' work. Beats the third degree!"

"Ah, —!" Dan whispered under his breath; then without turning back to the officer, who humbly disappeared with his prisoner, Dan came to me to say:

"How you going to beat that? I wouldn't trust *him*—not so far as I could throw a bull by the tail!"



JACK CORTLANDT had disappeared after a hurried whisper with Sam and the girl. Now the pair of new lovers were alone on the roof with Dan and me.

Standing a little apart, they were visibly in a state of exalted happiness too intense for smiles or laughter. On their faces was the brooding look of love that is close to sadness as intense joy is close to pain—each buried deep in the other's eyes.

They exchanged a little tremulous smile, drew an unsteady breath and turned together to look at Wheeler.

Dan stood staring into space, in active thought. His strong features had something of the steady, far-seeing look of a Viking figurehead looking through a storm at sea. His expression was that of surplus power that has never met check or match, and his mouth wore a half smile of self-conscious disdain. Just then he spoke to me.

"A flivver after all, doc! The Englishman was cut out for a winner; but he had a yellow streak, superstition, and it struck in. He's sore on himself about now— Oh, well! We can't all win!"

He turned just in time to see Sam and the girl turn to each other, and caught my arm.

"Let's get off this roof—make a gumshoe getaway, and let 'em make up for lost time. This is no place for us, doc!"

"Ah, now, Mr. Wheeler, what have we done?" The girl came to him with an upward look of reproach and admiration. "Sam and I may be a spectacle, but don't run away from us. I know your wound hurts, and you must feel sick from the shock and strain. You must not go! There's not a servant in this house, but Jack has gone to 'phone for a nurse and things. Please let us make a fuss over you—just to amuse us. Doctor—use your authority!"

I must have been soft from reaction myself, for I couldn't get any words out. They made a picture, those three!

Three finer specimens of their kind couldn't be found on Manhattan—therefore anywhere. And they had missed the sharp edge of eternity by a hair. It was of this that Sam and the girl were thinking, as they looked at the strange man who had brought them through when no other man living could have done it; but Dan himself saw nothing in the occasion that required emo-

tion or melodrama. He had been disappointed in the Englishman, but he had won out and was still King of Upper Crookdom—that was all. Now of course this young pair wanted him out of the way, even if they were too polite to say so.

"Sick? Who—me? You mean this crease? Nothing but a scratch, skin deep. The bump had me groggy for a minute, but this towel is strictly for stage effect. Look sweet, wouldn't I, climbing out a window at two A. M. with all your plate and jewels in a pillow case? Thank you just the same; but here's where I do the bless-you-my-children act and fade into the landscape."

The girl's look never wavered from his face. With a quirky little smile she drew nearer, unafraid of the daunting, cruel visage of the man-tamer.

"I may be 'handy with my eyes'—that hurt, Dan Wheeler. But look me in the eyes and tell me what you see there!"

Beautiful eyes they were, big and dark now, and brilliantly dewy with something that made mine smart to behold. She came closer and spoke softly.

"You got him for me, you know—you said you would. Then you saved us all—without a thought of what——" She stopped, her lips quivered, and she went on.

"We shouldn't be here but for you, you see——" Timidly, tenderly, her slender hands stole up to his shoulders. "So we belong to you now, you see—and you ought to care, just a little, don't you think? Now you've got us on your hands—isn't there a little room in that big, brave heart for Sam and me?" she whispered; dropped her head for a moment on his coat, and left a bright drop glistening when she looked up quickly with an April smile. "We're orphaned kids, you know. Don't you want us?"

I expected to see Dan get red and uncomfortable; possibly choky, as I was; but you could count on him for a surprise any time. He patted the lovely head lightly, and spoke with grave fatherly humor combined with the right depth of understanding.

"Hm-m! But this is so sudden! And we should be careful whom we take into the family—require testimonials as to character—and all that sort of thing, you know! But you're a promising pair to draw to. We'll see!" Over her head he commanded Sam with a look and gesture to come and take her.

CHAPTER XXIII

DAN ADMITS HE'S LICKED

HE WAS not to be persuaded to hold a reception downstairs, where they were searching for Sam, the lion of the evening. Dan insisted on being allowed to leave by the same way he had entered, and seeing that he desperately wanted to get away the girl finally consented. This was in the den, to which we had adjourned from the roof.

"You may go, if you will come to us often, on one condition. Promise to take just one little thing—I'll put it in your hand right now—and not even try to give it back." She had her hands behind her as she stood before him, seriously appealing. "You've refused us everything—you must promise me this. Promise, now?"

He looked at me with fierce question. I was where I could see her hands—she must have foreseen that—and I could see the edges of her lace handkerchief; nothing else. I nodded.

"All right!" he growled suspiciously. "Shoot it! I promise!"

Her face flashed, gloriously alight.

"Hold out your hand and shut your eyes!" she commanded. He was scared. She stamped her foot. "You promised! Your hand!"

He slowly held out his supple hand, green eyes narrowed.

"Close your eyes tight!" He did. "Can't you see a thing—honest?"

"Honest-Injun-hope-to-die!"

"Then— Hold fast all I give you!"

She put the lace wad in his palm, folded his fingers over it tight, took a bird-like peep up at his closed eyes, bent and dropped a soft kiss like a seal on that hand of Dan's which had—

"Here! What the——" Dan's eyes flew open at the soft touch. That *did* get him. He snatched away the hand as if her lips were hot coals, rubbed it frantically on his coat, and looked at me with appeal in the green eyes, now wet for the only time in my knowledge. "Doc, get me out of here—I'm a whipped cur!"

"But you dropped——" My mouth dropped open at the sight on the tigerskin rug. The famous diamond necklace flamed from the lacy folds where he had dropped it in his panic.

"You promised, Dan!" Sam picked up

both lace and diamonds and thrust them into Wheeler's pocket.

"You can sell them and give the money where you please," the girl added eagerly. "But I'd never see them again without a shudder if I had to keep them—and you never break a promise, remember!" She smiled into his face, which was gathering thunderclouds. "Be a sport and take your medicine!" Then with narrowed lids she made her rounded, cleft chin look grimly prominent and her voice sound deep and hoarse as she mimicked: "Oh, you Wheeler! You and your brain-drop—what!"

"I'd like to meet the man that could get that handkerchief!" said Dan, after a pause. "Take me home, doc—I'm licked!"



WHEN we were at last allowed to steal down the way we had come up—Dan and I and the Jap—Dan stopped me in the butler's pantry.

"Another pair of spoons in there in the dark!" he whispered. I listened for a moment to their talk, coming from the big dining-room that was lighted only by a street lamp. A girl's strong contralto said:

"I knew you were that kind. Real men, like you, must just die for want of a chance to do and dare in these humdrum days."

And the thin voice of young Hazelwood, a dainty miss in trousers, said:

"Any man wants real adventure; but what chance in New York? Take this house—nothing more harsh than a servant's quarrel ever happens here, and that never gets above stairs."

"That was young Hazelwood," said I, as we went on down to the laundry. "Regular devil, isn't he?"

"He might be, at that," said Dan judicially. "The dude that broke my jaw in Chicago looked a good deal like him."

When we said good night at Fifty-second Street he congratulated himself on being able to go straight home without laying down a false scent and shaking any shadows.

"I'll take you down there some time this week, now we're not followed, doc. It's right on the water—egg factory behind—White Leghorns; and Plymouth Rocks for eating—fried. And, doc—talk about cooks! Say! I got a real sho'-nough Southern mammy; and ma-an! She sutt'nly can fawevahmo' make battah braid—real white cawn meal f'um Vaginyah. And fry chick'n—mmmm-mm!"

"Quit! Makes my mouth water; and I got to get back to the Island to visit the dark cells. Thank you for a very pleasant evening, Mr. Wheeler! Only there was a bit too much of it."

"Yeh? Things *will* come in bunches that way, once they get started. Looks like rain. So long, doc—good luck!"



WEEKS afterward, on the porch of the little house by the sea, Dan admitted that he did not go straight home that night—or morning—but went to the station house to arrange for 'Arry's release and shipment to England. He wouldn't give details to me; but he found out that the Englishman had a widowed mother and kid sister in the Lorna Doone country, and that he was so keen after money because of his dream to own a "pub" and be an honest publican for the rest of his days. Most upper-class crooks have such dreams.

'Arry's came true, with part of the proceeds of the necklace, after all. I never

learned what became of the balance of the fortune from the sale of the jewels. I did not dare ask if any part went to the Nameless Order, and Dan never mentioned either the money or the unspeakable brotherhood. You can draw your own inference.

I know only that the Englishman sailed second cabin, and Dan Wheeler, again great in Manhattan, wore one of the most gorgeous of diamond scarf pins on special occasions, as befitted a man of his standing.

One other thing is worth mentioning. Dan Wheeler gave 'Arry no small fortune with a gambler's generosity. And yet, if 'Arry had *not* gone to pieces and shown abject terror on the roof that night, I know as well as if I had seen it that Dan would never have let up on him until he had made of him an unmanned, whimpering Thing like Jim Searing. He would have "broke" him, as sure as Fate, and let him "do his bit" without giving him a thought afterward.

Truly folks be fascinating, and the world is very full of 'em!



Man Medicine

by Henry Oyen



AS SCANLON came out of the great office building where he had just been "fired," he was mildly surprised to find that losing a position was not so dreadful, after all. He had feared it for the last two years, ever since he had made the humiliating discovery that he was settling into the rut.

For five years he had found employment

in the big office. The first three had been years of hope and fire. Scanlon was ambitious and confident. He appreciated the insignificance of his beginning on the bill desk, but he knew that ability and industry would force him upward.

At the end of three years had come a harsh awakening. He was not forcing himself upward. Energy and industry had not

availed. He had become just another one of the convenient, white-collared cogs, of which five hundred were required to make up the great office machine of which he was a part.

Then, having become a cog, Scanlon had ceased to hope. He was content merely to hold his position; and the one thing that he, in company with his fellow desk men, feared above all others, was to lose his place.

And yet now, when it had come, without warning, at the hands of a newly installed office manager who was weeding out what he considered dead timber, Scanlon came out of the big building where he had fruitlessly sowed five years of his young life with something of the sense of a burden lifted from his stooped clerk's shoulders.

He was free. For the first working-day in five years he did not have to go back into that prison-like building. At this thought Scanlon's office-thinned blood quickened. He was no longer a slave of the machine. He could do what he wished all day; go where he pleased and when he pleased, and no department manager could say him nay. And in the morning he need not worry about being on time!

Scanlon looked out on the busy street almost elated; but his new sense of freedom died in the morning. On second thought he realized that while it was true that he did not have to go back into the big building which he had just quitted, there were other offices all about him. In one of these he knew he must find employment before the two weeks' salary which had been given him upon his discharge was swallowed up by room rent, meals and laundry. It was all that he could do. In a big, wide world of opportunity, an ill paid clerk's position was the only one that he felt competent to take advantage of.

Revulsion followed promptly upon elation. Scanlon saw himself as he really was: a thin, weedy clerk-man of twenty-seven, with neither position nor possessions, and with nothing in the world for him to do but to hunt another place in the most crowded occupation in the overcrowded city. He knew, too, that it was his own fault. He had been made for better things. But the easy, comfortable life of the city office man had lulled his sterner self to sleep.

He had let himself drift. It was so easy, so comfortable, and so many fellows like him were doing the same. Instead of any

training that would have developed and fitted him for a better place in life, he had the memory of five years of easy routine work at a comfortable salary; instead of a physique that would stand a man well in the storm and stress of life he had a first-class knowledge of billiards, musical comedy tunes, and the ins and outs of the city as seen with a crowd of fellows.

And now he found himself suddenly in the street. He had played with the great, cruel city, and the city had beaten him. "Dead timber," the new office manager had said! Dead timber at twenty-seven. Into the street, with the feelings of a middle-aged man, at a time when youth was scarcely over! The power and prosperity of the great city roared around him as if mocking his condition.

A hot feeling of resentment crowded into Scanlon's throat as he stood there in the forenoon sunlight and appraised himself and his circumstances. There was some resentment toward the great firm that had used him for five years and thrown him away so casually, some toward the great city which had him at its mercy; but mostly it was resentment toward himself for falling into the rut in which he found himself so helpless.

He started across the street, and as a teamster shouted at him to get out of the way Scanlon looked up at the man and actually envied him. The man sat braced and straight in his seat, obviously ready for a fight or a frolic. At least he had a physique that made him a man among men, a man who could make his way wherever there was work for two strong arms.

Scanlon felt of his own thin arms, once thick and firm, and went bitterly on his way through the crowded downtown streets. The crowd jostled him, and he had not the spirit to fight back. The mightiness of the city oppressed him, and he did not feel competent to battle with it for place. Scanlon just then was standing on the first steps of the path that leads to Down and Out.

II



FIRST SERGEANT SWANSON, Fifteenth Infantry; twenty years' service stripes on his immaculate blue sleeve, foreign-service stripes—Cuba, Philippines and China—above them; his specially tailored blouse fitting his stanch shoulders as if he had been poured into it;

stiff neck, bristling mustache, and sharp eyes, stood before the recruiting-office on Clark Street this fine Spring morning, scanning the crowd that passed incessantly before his eyes. Sergeant Swanson was an expert in the appraisal of male specimens of the human species. Two things he could tell almost without fail when his eyes fell upon a man: whether the man felt down on his luck, and whether he could be worked up, *via* setting-up and general drill, into satisfactory material for the small but thoroughly select army of Uncle Sam. His eyes picked up Scanlon when that dejected young man was half a square away, and he paused in his military strutting to estimate Scanlon's availability as a recruit.

Scanlon came down the street with his head hanging. He paid little attention to where he was going, and this is a poor way to walk in a crowded city street. Directly before Sergeant Swanson's stand the inevitable bump came. A burly, red-faced man, of the tough bartender type, plowed squarely against Scanlon and sent him staggering into the gutter.

"Watch where you're goin', yah boob!" growled the man. "What're yah doin'? Sleepin'?"

Scanlon was slightly dazed. He stood looking after the man, angry, but unable to bring a retort through his lips. The man disappeared in the crowd, and Scanlon turned—and met Sergeant Swanson face to face.

Sergeant Swanson was grinning. His bristling mustache and his round, bronzed cheeks fairly quivered with amusement. In his eyes there was a most tantalizing twinkle.

"Irish, too, you be, by the looks of you," he chuckled. "Why didn't you take a poke at 'im?"

"I would," began Scanlon lamely, "if——"

The Sergeant's cannon-like laughter interrupted.

"You would, would you?" he snapped. "Why, if you'd 'a' swung on 'im it would have hurt 'im about as much as his old mother giving 'im a kiss. A fine scrapper you'd make—I don't think! Why don't you put some muscle on that skinny body of yours? Then you could talk to men when they bump you off the walk. Ha-ha-ha! Big fellow like you! Irish, too. Oughta be 'shamed of yourself."

While indulging in these delicate remarks the Sergeant was appraising Scanlon as a cattle buyer appraises cattle, to estimate

the value of him in bone, gristle and tissue. He saw that, in spite of Scanlon's leanness and weediness, there was a good barrel of a body, though the chest was in-sunken, the shoulders drooped forward, and the belly protruded from too much sitting slumped in an office chair. No muscles developed on the chest, back or arms; very little meat; nevertheless a good foundation.

Swanson looked at the wrists, white and drooping, but with big, square bones solidly joined to the hand, and knew that the man was well framed. Felt down on his luck, too. Just about ripe. Sergeant Swanson swept Scanlon from eyes to ankles with a look of mingled appreciation and contempt.

"Why don't a guy like you train with the he-men?" he said winningly.

That was how Scanlon came to enter the Service.

The examining surgeon was surprised to find that he stood the physical examination satisfactorily.

"There ought to be a law to prevent men from letting fine bodies like yours run to seed," he snapped, stepping back. "Well, there he is, lieutenant, if you want him."

Lieutenant Kane needed another recruit that day to make a satisfactory showing for the month, but also, Lieutenant Kane had a conscience; and he had noted Scanlon's carefully kept nails.

"It's none of my business, old man," he said confidentially, "but if you're taking on because of booze, or a woman, or money trouble—don't do it. Three years is a long time, and by the looks of you you haven't been used to the sort of thing you'll be up against in the Service. You'll find pretty rough company, and—" the lieutenant shrugged his shoulders—"there isn't really anything in it for a fellow of your sort, you know. Have you thought it over?"

"I have," said Scanlon.

"Still want to go in?"

"Yes."

"All right then." The lieutenant again became the officer. "Sergeant, here's another man to go out to Fort Sheridan to-night."

III



PRIVATE "BUTCH" COUGHLIN was lying in the tall grass beside the commissary building entertaining four cronies of M Company with the graphic tale of how he had made Stanley Ketchell,

middle-weight champion, back water in a barroom in Butte, when Scanlon and three other recruits for M Company, laden with suitcases, tumbled out of the train and entered the Reservation.

Coughlin sat up. Things had been rather slow for him lately. As chief fist fighter and wit of M Company—he regarded the new acquisitions with glee. Scanlon, because of his clothes and bearing, he selected at a distance, and as the raw squad came past Coughlin's voice rose in an imitation of feminine falsetto:

"Oh, Clarence! How dast you go mixing with those horrid rough soldiers? You go right back to the ribbon counter where you belong, Clarence!"

A titter rose from his cronies in the grass; the other recruits grinned. Scanlon knew there was no mistaking whom the "Clarence" was for, and looked straight ahead.

"That's right, Clarence," persisted the tormentor. "Don't you pay any attention to the horrid things."

It was too much. Scanlon looked over his shoulder to mark the speaker; his glance met Coughlin's, and in that brief instant both men knew that they were enemies to the core.

"Only wait," laughed Butch, joyously rolling over as the rookies passed on. "Only wait till we get that sissy out where we want him. Gawd bless old Uncle Swanson for sending us poor soldiers playthings like him!"

Recruit Scanlon had a hard time of it for the next three weeks. In the first place, he had never handled anything more closely resembling a rifle than a billiard cue, and in the second, five years of office work had not made him handy on his feet. Corporal Perkins, the five-term veteran with the little blue scars on his cheeks, and the bitterness in his heart of the man who has handled too many stupid rookies, wanted to know if men were so scarce in the U. S. A., since he had to waste his time over misfits like this one.

"Can't you even pull in your belly when I say, 'Shun'?" he queried plaintively. "D'you want me to ask the Captain's wife for her old corsets for you? Now try 'er again. 'Shun! Throw out your chest, pull in your belly, stiffen your legs and stand up like a man. Oh, Gawd fergive me fer cursing in my sleep! You're worse an' worse, an' more of it!"

Nobody ever had talked to Scanlon like that before. In the office it had been—

"Mr. Scanlon, I wish you would kindly enter these invoices."

Here it was:

"Come on, you wiggly-kneed mutt; stand up there. 'Shun!"

In those first weeks Scanlon regretted during every waking minute the mad impulse that had sent him into the recruiting-office in response to Sergeant Swanson's rough taunt. Lieutenant Kane had been right: Scanlon hadn't been used to the sort of thing he was up against now, and he found his Company rough—very rough. He had never associated with such men. His companions had always been fellows from the office.

These men were different, very different. Had they been workingmen they would have scorned such effeminate employment as entering invoices. But they weren't workingmen. They were mostly big, grown-up boys who refused to take the world too seriously; English, Irish, Yankee, Southerner, Westerner, German, Polish, Italian, Indian, Scotch, Swedish—adventurers all, to whom the routine of industrial life would have been like fetters upon a hawk. Time after time the impulse to desert was well nigh irresistible to Scanlon, but something within him always shamed him in these crises.

"Going to be a quitter?" said this inner voice. "Going to prove yourself a weak sister? Stick! You've done it now. See if you can't take your medicine like a man."

So rooky Scanlon gritted his teeth and pulled in his belly, and held his little fingers on the seam of his khakis, and did his best to take his medicine. Gradually Corporal Perkins began to discern the spirit that was stiffening his new pupil, and gradually he began to have some respect for the rooky.

"He's all right inside, sir," he reported to Captain Cadotte. "He's been in the wrong service so long he looks bad, that's all. I believe he'll make a soldier in time, sir."

"If he don't," puffed the Captain, stroking his red nose, "he'll wish he never was born. I'll skin him alive. Rub his nose in the dirt. Rub it hard; you hear me? I won't have anything in M Company that isn't tough enough to chew nails."

"Yessir," said the drill corporal, saluting. He knew what the Old Man meant; the Captain, too, had observed that recruit Scanlon was fighting hard to take his medicine like a man.

"You'll never look like a soldier," said the Corporal one Saturday evening, when Scanlon and he had leave, "because you've let yourself grow wrong; but that don't make any difference as long as you feel like one. That's the main thing; you got to feel like a soldier to be one. Now let's walk down to some quiet place and throw in a scuttle of suds. You 'n' me got a drink comin' together; we sure have sweated some together."

"I suppose I've been about the rawest you ever saw," said Scanlon.

"Aw, buck up!" Corporal Perkins smote him heartily between the shoulder blades. "Get over that under-dog expression. I been noticing you; you act like the world had you flat on your back and you didn't have guts enough to get up again."

"Well, that's about the way I feel about it, corporal," admitted Scanlon.

The corporal spat.

"Come out of it. I don't want to hear your story, but—forget it. You're as good as the next man that walks. Get your nerve back. Look the world in the eye and tell it to go to —. Come on, now. I can remember the time when we could have strolled into a canteen right here in the Post and had our beer all quiet and handy. Now we got to go down to Highwood where they put chloral in your glass if they think you're worth robbing. Oh, well; the temperance societies knows what's best for us, of course."

With this little sarcasm Corporal Perkins led the way past the cavalry stables, the corral, and the farrier's shop, out of the Reservation on to the road that lay to the nearest place of refreshment. As they passed out, Private Butch Coughlin whistled to two of his cronies who, like himself, had leave for the evening.

"Come on," he laughed. "Old Perkins is takin' Clarence down the line. Come on an' watch me get that sissy guy right."

IV



SCHOENBERG'S modest little Summer garden was moderately crowded that Saturday evening. It was not a pay day, but Schoenberg had his steady run of custom from the more quiet economical men at the Post, the men who have a little money to spend the whole month through. Corporal Perkins was one

of these. Corporal Perkins always had money. Wherefore Schoenberg welcomed the Corporal and his companion politely and showed them to a table near the dance floor in the center of the little garden.

At the table waited two young, giggling friends of Perkins, Agnes and Gertie, frivolous little waitresses from the big hotel down at Highland Park out for their innocent weekly pursuit of Joy. Before Scanlon had time to be surprised he was out on the dance floor and the delighted Agnes was saying:

"Gee! You never learnt to dance at no soldier's shindig. Bet you went to reg'lar dancing-school."

Which was as Private Butch Coughlin desired things. Butch had taken two drinks to make him a little more ugly than usual. He made his way swiftly on to the floor, pushing by the gate tender with a sneer. As Scanlon came past with the entranced Agnes hanging on his arm, Coughlin cunningly stuck out his foot. The next instant Scanlon, from his undignified position on the floor, looked up and saw Butch looking down at him with a grin of contempt.

"I told you you ought to go back to the ribbon counter, Clarence," he said, as Scanlon rose to his feet. "This life is too rough for you. Oh, much too rough, indeed!"

He stood poised on the balls of his feet, his arms swinging loosely at his side, scornfully facing his victim. And in that ugly moment Scanlon knew shame in its bitterest form. For he was afraid! He was afraid of the cruel rowdy before him. He was afraid that Butch would strike him, afraid of the consequences of physical combat with bare hands.

He felt cold and sick. Coughlin, standing there smiling contemptuously, seemed to loom over him, to dominate him, to force him backward by his mere presence. If he had been alone Scanlon knew in his inner self that he would have run. He was dazed from the fall. His tongue refused to move. Then he saw two men dragging Coughlin off the floor and two hands grasped his own arms.

"Not here, not here."

It was Corporal Perkins who was speaking.

"No scrapping here, but—" he spoke close to Scanlon's ear—"you got to fight

or the whole Comp'ny will be walking over you."

Outside, behind the garden, in the moonlight the little group of soldiers formed a ring. The thing promised a fight worth seeing; for although Butch was known for his skill with his fists and Scanlon was an unknown quantity, the latter had the advantage in size.

"You've got to fight."

Perkins was stripping the blouse off Scanlon's back.

"No matter if you get a beating, you got to go to it and show your nerve."

Nerve! Scanlon was cold from fright. He was no fighting-man, and he knew it. He was a lamb led to the slaughter.

He glanced around at the faces in the ring. Had he been more knowing in such things he would have seen that on every face there was a guarantee that he would have fair play, the old instinctive fairness that prevails wherever men settle their differences face to face and with their bare fists. But only fair play, nothing more. And Scanlon being inexperienced, saw in those faces nothing but a desire to see him slaughtered.

Fight! He could no more fight than a rabbit. And Coughlin——

"Now!" hissed Perkins, thrusting him forward. "Swing at him—once, anyhow."

It was all over in five seconds. Scanlon stopped in his tracks where Perkins's push had left him. Coughlin came in fast, fainted once with the right, drove the left into Scanlon's solar plexus, then swung the right like a snapped whip at the jaw. No guard. The blow went home true as a bullet and Scanlon dropped flush on his face, knocked out.

"Oh, Clarence!" mocked Coughlin as he replaced his blouse. "I told you those horrid soldiers was too rough for you."

Corporal Perkins and two other old men remained to help Scanlon to his feet. Not a word did the old non-com utter until Scanlon's senses were cleared. Then with a cracking oath he growled:

"You dub! You got to lick that guy or you're no man."



SCANLON did not sleep that night. He lay flat on his cot, staring straight up at the whitewashed barrack-room ceiling. He felt lost. He dreaded the coming of daylight. For with day-

light would come meetings with Coughlin, the man whom he was afraid of, the man who was his master.

Besides, there was a small, ragged cut on the point of his chin, and Scanlon knew that before noon half of the Post would know how the mark was come by. How was he going to face it? How could he stand it?

The sound of the sentry's slow pacing along the concrete walk before the barracks choked in him the impulse to flee. Flee? No, he couldn't do that. He had sworn to see the thing through. He must take his medicine like a man.

"You got to lick that guy or you're no man!"

How well old Perkins knew how men felt within them! Lick Coughlin. Yes, that was it. Scanlon shivered at the thought. But something within him, something old and imperious, drove him up to the scratch. Lick Butch Coughlin. It wasn't a lofty ambition. But he had to do it if he was going to make a man of himself.

"By ——!" whispered rooky Scanlon, thrusting his lean fists up in the dark. "I'll lick him or get killed in the attempt."

"You'd better," said Corporal Perkins grimly in the morning. "It'll be one or the other. Jerry Cadotte's heard about it."

Scanlon blanched.

"Wha—what'd he say?"

Perkins shook his head.

"It isn't for me to try to repeat Cap'n Cadotte's language when he gets going good. He's some spieler, old Jerry is. The most lady-like thing he said was that if six feet of alleged male like yourself allowed a jailbird like Coughlin to ride him you weren't worth skinning, but he'd make life so miserable for you that you'd curl up and die."

"I'll take up boxing," said Scanlon firmly.

"Boxing!" Perkins snorted. "It ain't your mitts that's wrong with you; it's your nerve. It ain't simply that Coughlin has got it on you in experience; it's because your feet get cold when he looks you in the eye. He's your boss-man, that's what's the matter. Get that? You could take all the boxing lessons in the world, and get to be more scientific than Jim Corbett, and yet if you put up your hands afraid of him, like you were last night, you'd get beat up just the same. You got to forget you been a pen pusher and get a man's heart in you. Then try 'im again."

Two weeks later Scanlon did try again, down on the swimming-beach by the lake, with Schmidt, the old artillery farrier, holding the watch. Scanlon felt more confident, less fearful of the danger of being hurt—until he saw Coughlin standing before him. Coughlin was looking into his eyes and smiling that same contemptuous smile.

Scanlon wilted again. It was a little more disgraceful than the first fight. Scanlon actually tried to run. Therefore he suffered the ignominy of being knocked flat by a blow behind the ear; and old Schmidt stopped the fight out of pity.

A month later he repeated the attempt. Perkins had trained him to the minute. The setting-up drill, the exercise and the regular life had begun to work a change in Scanlon's weedy body. He stood up straighter; his joints were firmer; and small, hard bunches were beginning to rise on his thin, long arms, on his shoulders and back. Across his in-sunken chest the muscles were beginning to play under the skin and his soft belly was growing hard and flat. When he closed his hands now he displayed a tight, bony fist, and Perkins had instilled one primitive fighting idea in him.

"Rush, rush, rush! You're taller, heavier, and longer-gear'd than he is. Run over 'im. Get 'im to backing up. Then batter him to a pulp."

They fought in the scrub oak beyond the rifle range this time.

"I'll rush him, I'll rush him," repeated Scanlon as they stripped to the belt.

But the moment they squared off the resolve fell dead. He couldn't do it. It wasn't possible. Coughlin didn't want it that way, and Coughlin dominated him.

Scanlon was in better condition this time, so the fight lasted for three minutes. Coughlin was feeling good, and Scanlon was cruelly punished. And Perkins let him come dragging back to barracks alone.

As he came slinking past the rear of the bachelor officers' quarters Scanlon heard loud and excited talk, a jig step or two, and over it all the voice of Second Lieutenant Benny Brackett of M Company joyously raised in song. In the company room none noticed his entrance. The men were gathered about Perkins and the older non-coms, and everybody was talking at once.

"What's up?" asked Scanlon when Perkins broke away.

"The best in the world," chuckled the

old fellow. "We got our marching-orders at last. The battalion is detailed for two years' service in the Philippines."

"Then there'll be a chance to get into the real thing?"

Scanlon shot out the words without thinking.

"Of course there will," said Perkins, looking at him queerly. "If there's any rough stuff to be pulled, you can bet they'll use this old Company."

"Fine!"

Scanlon couldn't understand why the news had put such new life into him. A couple of months ago the thought of battle, of giving and dealing death, would have revolted his office-trained soul. But now, with bruised face and sore body, the thought lifted him out of the humiliation of the beating at the hands of Butch Coughlin.

He looked around for Butch. That eminent mitt artist was sitting alone on his cot with a dazed, uncomfortable look in his hitherto cocky eyes.

V



A NEW note sprang up instantly in the life of M Company with the order to depart toward foreign service. The men forgot the pettiness and narrowness engendered by barrack life. The hard drinkers sobered up. The surly, quiet fellows became sociable. Even the men detailed as officers' servants—the detail which curses the Service—who are always contemplating desertion, went to their lowly tasks with a soldier's spirits. M Company was going to the Philippines. M Company had a history and a tradition to maintain. M Company would get into action, if any action there was to be had. Three cheers for the Army, and three more for the little brown brothers who gave the Army something to do!

From bristling, red-nosed Captain Cadotte to the lowliest rookie—which was Private Scanlon—the new spirit took hold. There were bustle and eagerness. Barrack-room quarrels were forgotten; enmities became friendship. When M Company entrained for San Francisco there was just one man on the rolls who carried a grudge against a comrade. That was Scanlon.

Butch Coughlin by this time would gladly have shaken hands and called the thing off. As he confided to his chums, there was no

credit to be had in battering a man who didn't know enough to push out a straight left. Also, such easy victories were becoming tiresome. But when he made as if to make advances toward peace he was met by a look from Scanlon that settled that idea for all time. That look in time began to bother Coughlin. It told him that there was at least one man in the world who was resolved on his downfall.

On the transport *Sheridan* Scanlon made another attempt to convince himself and M Company, including Corporal Perkins, that he was a man. The bout took place on the after deck with the enlisted men fancying themselves the only spectators. They formed a silent ring, and the man who allowed himself to speak above a whisper was handled at once, silently but with vigor and without interrupting the fight. Back of the ring, in the darkness, behind companionways and other convenient hiding-places, the officers watched, more silent than the men.

Scanlon had nerved himself to desperation this time. He would rush, rush, rush, and never stop rushing. He would rush the instant the fight began. He—he saw Coughlin's left fist menacing his head, saw the right held back ready for a crushing swing, saw Coughlin's confident eyes—and quailed.

"Rush, — you! Rush!" hissed Perkins.

With a groan Scanlon threw himself forward. He swung his arms wildly. Coughlin, stepping neatly aside, punished him cruelly about the body; then, as Scanlon turned, knocked him flat to the deck with a hook to the chin that shattered Scanlon's front teeth. Two minutes later Butch ended the fight with a stomach punch that left Scanlon conscious but helpless on the planks.

Coughlin stood over him sneering. Then he caught the look from Scanlon's upturned eyes. The sneer vanished. Coughlin backed away.

"I don't want to fight that guy any more," he whined. "No, I'll be darned if I do."

"Why not?" asked his chum. "You could beat him up from now till doomsday. Why not hand it to him if he keeps looking for it?"

Coughlin did not answer. He couldn't quite understand, himself.

Captain Cadotte retreated out of hearing before expressing himself.

"Gr-rr-rr!" he growled. "A quitter in M Company! The big, hulking—lady's maid! If M Company gets any work to do I'll make him curl up and die. I'll—I'll make him wish he was in the Cavalry!"

Which, from Infantry Officer Cadotte, threatened dire things for rooky Scanlon.

VI



AND M Company did get work to do, just as the old non-coms knew it would if there was any work to be done. One fine afternoon, three months after the landing at Manila, Captain Jerry Cadotte and his eighty men lay on their bellies in a Camarine rice field overlooking a valley down which six or seven hundred little brown brothers were reported to be coming marauding. It was hot, and the men had waited an hour, and Captain Cadotte was growing impatient.

"Detail two men to slip down to that curve in the valley and report what they see," he growled. "Here, wait a minute," he added, stricken by an inspiration. "Send that misfit prize fighter, Coughlin, and that sissy, Scanlon. Tell them to wait out there till they see the enemy; then report."

So it came about that less than six months after he had quitted the occupation of an office bill clerk in a far-away city, Scanlon found himself sneaking along a Camarine hillside, searching for an armed, bloodthirsty enemy in company with—Butch Coughlin! And twenty minutes after he had started on this little journey he was lying flat on his belly on said hillside to allow the whining Remington slugs plenty of room to pass over his head.

Privates Scanlon and Coughlin had found the tribesmen. Eight hundred yards beyond the curve the valley was full of them. They lay in the grass, behind jungle scrub, anything that would hide them, and sniped joyously at the two khaki-clad figures that came reconnoitering. For the first time in his life Private Scanlon heard the whine of a bullet—and to his surprise he was not afraid. It was different, this. He was afraid of Coughlin's fists. That was because he couldn't use his own. But this long-range fighting held no terror for him. He could use his rifle. He—

"Let's go back. Let's beat it. Come on!"

Private Scanlon turned in amazement to the chattering Coughlin. The bruiser was

white. His eyes were roving and his hand was trembling. And he was hugging the ground. A bullet snipped the grass beside them and Coughlin groaned. Private Scanlon slipped his rifle out before him.

"We got to go back, of course," he said, "because that's our orders. But, believe me, I'm going to have a crack at those Gugas first. It's about six hundred to that nearest guy."

He began methodically to empty his clip at the clump of grass sheltering the most advanced of the enemy. At his fourth shot a little brown man leaped high in the air, spun for an instant on his heels and fell with outstretched arms on his face.

"Got him!" yelled Scanlon. "Now we'll go back—— What's the matter?"

For Butch Coughlin had already started back, and he was going as fast as his strong legs could carry him.

"All right," said Captain Cadotte when Scanlon reported.

The Captain was a little puzzled. It was obvious that Scanlon was elated. "We'll kick 'em out of the valley. As skirmishers—double-quick! Forward, march!"

As the line swept into action Scanlon again looked at Coughlin. Butch was very sick. Scanlon smiled.

To the disgust of M Company the marauders would not stand and fight in the valley. They retreated all through the hot afternoon with M Company marching desperately to get within proper range. At eventide Captain Cadotte's command found itself facing a jungle-clad mountain, with the native scouts checking the advance with the news that the tribesmen had reached the fortress toward which they were retreating.

"Wait for support nothing!" roared Jerry Cadotte in reply to Lieutenant Neal's suggestion. "Tomorrow morning we clean up that outfit all by ourselves. We've come too far to let any one else in on the fun."

And the men who heard cheered wildly.

"Well, boy, tomorrow you'll see what a charge is like," said Corporal Perkins that night, watching Scanlon closely. "There'll be a lot of long-range work at first, and we'll try to tease 'em into rushing us. If they do we'll throw 'em back. Then you'll see old Jerry Cadotte take this bunch up that hill, and if they stand—— Hooray for war!"

"Tomorrow," said Scanlon grimly, "I'll put it over Butch Coughlin."

"How?" demanded Corporal Perkins. "Watch and see," Scanlon chuckled. "I've got it on him now, that's all. I've got him by the short hairs. Tomorrow I even up for every punch he ever landed on me."



THE row began at daybreak next morning, and it all fell out much as Perkins had predicted. A pretended retreat brought the outlaws swarming down the hill, screaming with the lust for slaughter. At a hundred and fifty yards the lead-storm from M Company caught them, stopping them like a wall, stilling their shouts, dropping them in writhing lumps, and throwing them back into their jungle fastness. There was a lull, during which M Company waited for the order to charge, tensed like runners at the starting-line; and during that lull Private Scanlon crept silently to a position directly behind Private Butch Coughlin. For Scanlon had been watching his man, and he knew what he knew.

"Fix bayonets!"

The short, heavy knives snapped into place. Private Coughlin fumbled wildly. Scanlon grinned.

"Charge!"

Private Butch Coughlin groaned as the line sprang up. He looked wildly to fight and left. He saw that no one was watching him. He drew back to sneak away—and took the point of Private Scanlon's bayonet in the small of his back, just to one side of the spine. Private Coughlin screamed and leaped forward. He turned around. He saw Scanlon's bayonet gleamly, steadily before his eyes. But, more terrible than that, above the bayonet he saw Scanlon's face; and Scanlon was smiling a terrible smile.

The Camarine rifles in the jungle were terrifying, but Scanlon's face and his bayonet were more so.

"Now I've got you," hissed Scanlon. "Charge!"

And Butch Coughlin charged. He charged so rapidly in this mad race to get away from those terrible eyes and the bayonet that always menaced his back, that he passed through the charging line of M Company. He threw away his rifle to charge the faster. He reached the jungle and kept on. He was fifty yards in advance of the Company now, and Private Scanlon, with leveled bayonet, was at his heels. He turned once as he neared the

bamboo barricade on which a squat outlaw was standing swinging a heavy *kris*. But the bayonet and the eyes were close behind.

So with an unearthly yell he ran on to the barricade. The squat outlaw smote him from the shoulder blade down, and so Butch Coughlin escaped from the man he had shamed as his victim. Scanlon's bayonet was in the Camarine's heart a second later, and then M Company came whirling victoriously over the barricade.



THE men lay panting in the nipa grass and looked away from what had been Butch Coughlin.

"A coward in M Company!" puffed

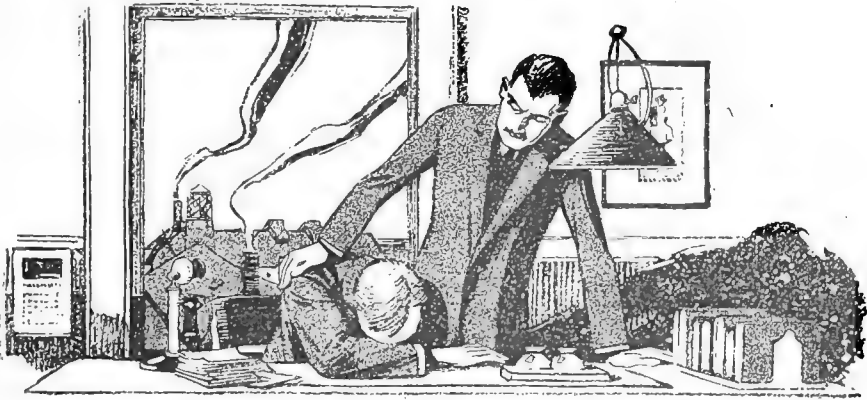
Captain Cadotte. "That big bum of a pug! He'd have quit, he'd have disgraced me for life, if it hadn't been for that—that—"

"Yessir, if it hadn't been for that big lady's maid," assisted Corporal Perkins respectfully. "Just the same, sir, even Private Coughlin had his uses, sir."

"How?" snapped Captain Jerry.

"He made Private Scanlon take his medicine, sir, and—"

"Right-o!" roared the Captain, glancing at where Scanlon was thrusting his bayonet into the ground to clean it. "He did that and, by the Lord Harry, that medicine has made a man!"



Pure Gall

by Frank Goewey Jones

THE worn steel letter opener in Day's hand rasped a slit along the edge of the envelope that topped his pile of morning mail. His right forefinger and thumb, deft after nine years' practise in opening many business letters every day, quickly plucked out a folded sheet and with a sudden twist and snap of the wrist flipped it outspread on his desk.

Five letters Day rasped open, scanned with a scowl, and sniffed at. Then the paper knife clattered on the nicked top of his desk. He jammed both hands deep in his trousers pockets and kicked his heels disgustedly at the scarred legs of his swivel chair.

Andrews, the sales manager, passing through the hall on the way to his desk in the general office, paused at Day's door. On his face was a look of mixed anxiety and hope.

"How do they open up this morning, Mr. Day?" he queried.

"Rotten!" snorted the junior partner. "Every——jobber in the country is yellow. There isn't enough sand in the lot to fill a peanut shell. No wonder we're having a panic! All the business men seem to be sitting up nights planning their own funerals."

He whirled to answer the desk telephone.

"Hello! No, this is Conroy & Day. Ring off!"

Bang! The receiver was back on its hook. The junior partner creaked his chair around to face the door again and reverted to his tirade.

"No, Andrews——"

He broke off. The discreet sales manager had vanished.

Day jerked open the middle drawer of his desk, jerked up the lid of the humidor inside, and jerked out a very good cigar. He snatched and scratched a match. His first, rapid puffs belched angry, sharply punctuated clouds of smoke that seemed to bang from his lips, like explosions at the mouth of an automobile muffler. Then, when the angry spark of his wrath had snapped a few times through the perfect mixture of cool Havana and hot blood, there purred out a steamy, warm exhaust which hummed of idle energy eager to leap into work.

Day, ashamed of his recent petulance, grinned a sheepish, rather grim grin, then ripped open the next envelope of the pile with the querulous impatience of one who hurried to be done with a distasteful task.

Three more letters he read with no varying of the expression of repugnance on his lean face. The effect of the fourth was voltaic. Delight sprang out of his disgust like a merry Jack-in-the-box from beneath a black cover. He was on his feet in an instant, as if a spring in the seat of this chair had shot him erect.

"That'll cheer Conroy up!" he chortled. He clutched the letter and ran to his partner's office.

The senior member of the firm of Conroy & Day sat staring straight down his long nose when Day noisily opened the door connecting their private offices. He looked up, startled. The junior partner confronted a pair of beetling-browed, black eyes which made deep, dark pockets in the gray gloom of a worry-wrinkled face.

"So you've got 'em again, eh?" Day accused gaily. He snapped his fingers the way the magician does before he begins to extract incriminating ladies' lingerie and good resolutions from the person of the bald bachelor from the audience who kindly volunteered to assist in the experiment. "Come out of it! Do I know a cure for the blues? I should worry a good deal and stand pat on four aces! Listen here!"

Like a rapid-fire gun he shot out the sentences of the letter in his hand. At the end

of his reading he slammed the four closely written sheets on his partner's table and thumped them approvingly with his fist.

"Kinney's a sure 'nough salesman," he praised. "He's *there*, ab-so-lute-ly! No come-'round-next-week flim-flams for him! He gets the ink marks on the dotted line at the bottom of the last page. Will, I wouldn't take fifty thousand dollars for our two years' profits on that Consolidated Electric contract!"

Conroy's dull eyes had flared with brief enthusiasm kindled by his partner's delight. All at once the lambent fire flickered and went out. He grabbed a letter from his own pile of mail and thrust it at Day.

"Read that," he said bluntly.

The junior partner's swift eyes glanced through the single paragraph. A storm of wrath swept over his features. Athwart his dark face the glittering glare of twin, steel-blue bolts ripped like lightning across black clouds. He read the letter a second time, aloud. His contemptuous, angry tongue kicked the words out of his mouth.

MESSRS. CONROY & DAY, CITY.

Gentlemen:

We are obliged to advise you that we shall not be able to renew your partnership note for \$10,000 and the two other notes, each in the sum of \$7,500, signed by William H. Conroy and James L. Day respectively and by you endorsed, due the 18th inst. and payable to our order. The present stringency in the money market makes it imperatively necessary that we call in some of our loans.

Yours truly,
FIRST NATIONAL BANK,
A. C. HART, Cashier.

"—— them!" Day's expletive thundered with fervor. "Isn't that plain ——! Here we are with a big contract just landed and ought to be putting in our best licks making the stuff, and now we've got to monkey 'round with those old fossils down at the bank to fix up a dinky little credit line. Oh, ——!" he repeated in a snort of disgust.

He began tramping the office as if it were a cage.



"YOU think, then, we *can* fix it?"

Conroy's tone was very anxious. Out of the depths of his flaccid hopelessness his hunted eyes pleaded for the assurance of succor.

Day turned abruptly to face his partner. His fists bulged in his pockets. His big head jutted out from his square shoulders like a menacing rock overhanging a mountain side.

"We've *got* to, haven't we?" He ripped back his retort. The harsh demand had the sound of a bulldog's growl. "We can't pay, and we'll never be able to borrow twenty-five thousand dollars on a week's notice."

"There's an alternative," slowly responded Conroy. He paused a moment, wincing, before he named it. "We can *fail*!"

He whispered the dreadful final word, not as one murmurs something to be guardedly spoken, but shuddering, with a choke of breaking weakness in his strained voice. Conroy drooped beside his desk; his hands hung limp between his knees. His voice when he went on was faint and muffled, as if the pall of gloom that enveloped him had been a thick blanket.

"Jim, old Barclay hates us, now that he's a competitor. The bank is only his tool in the calling of our notes. He's using his power as president of the First National to smash us. We're cutting too deep into the profits of his New Electrical Specialties Company. I've been expecting some skulduggery ever since he bought control of the cussed concern."

Day flung himself into the nearest chair. "I know, I know!" he agreed impatiently. "But Barclay isn't the whole bank, by a jugful. They've ju-ju-just *got* to wait!" Day was so fiercely exasperated that he stuttered. "Why, this new contract alone will pay them twice over."

Conroy's drooped head twitched up.

"But we don't dare mention that we've landed it!" he almost frantically reminded his partner. "Barclay'll have hydrophobia when he finds out we're going to supply the Consolidated next year. Our taking that business away from his New Electrical Specialties Company scrapes all the filling out of his pie and leaves him the crusts. He wouldn't enjoy choking us off before we get a chance to lick our chops over those profits! Oh, no! He'll be tickled to death to have the bank renew our notes so as not to spoil our appetites!"

Conroy's swirling sarcasm was only a gust. It blew itself away with its own vehemence. His faltering voice dragged on like a dreary, weary wind lost in the woods.

"Jim, he's got us foul. There isn't a single way of escape. It won't even do any good to beg."

"Beg!" Day spewed the word out of his mouth. "We couldn't possibly hurt our chances worse than by getting down on our

knees. We're going to *make* the bank carry us. I can't think how—yet."

He made a pestle of his right fist and ground with it in the mortar of his hollowed left palm as if he were pulverizing his vindictive competitor's scheme to ruin the firm.

"But truckling to Lemuel Barclay won't get us anything. Our only chance is to lick him in a stand-up fight. We'll need backbone—lots of it and then some. Stiffen up!" he yelled at the spineless figure in the opposite chair.

Conroy jumped and straightened. But he had merely obeyed a command, and looked ready to slump again if his partner should for even a moment shift the threatening glower of his hypnotic eyes.

The bulldog look on Day's countenance became suddenly more pronounced. His jaw seemed to shoot forward. The grate of his teeth sent a shiver through the older man's every sensitive, taut-strung nerve.

"Now look here, Will," Day harshly resumed his monologue. "We mustn't let this thing get our goat. And no little, dried-up, mummy wart like old 'Lemon' Barclay is going to pucker up between us and fifty thousand dollars. We've got five days yet to figure out a way to make him renew those notes."

Some one knocked at the door between Conroy's room and the general office.

"Come!" Day called sharply.

The shop superintendent entered with, "Good morning, gentlemen."

"Morning, Schwartz," growled Day. "Wha' d'you want?"

Conroy had only mumbled his acknowledgment of the superintendent's greeting and dropped his eyes to his nervously twisting hands.

"We'll finish that run of twenty thousand coils this afternoon," said Schwartz, as if he apologized for the statement. "What'll we make next?"

He shuffled his feet uneasily while he waited for the answer to his question. The signs of a clash between the partners were obvious.

Conroy looked up. But all his initiative had shriveled; he did not speak.

Day frowned thoughtfully and studied the palm of his hand a moment or two. Then, as if he had read his fortune there, he ordered with crisp decision, not so much as glancing at his partner, "Run twenty thousand more, Schwartz."

Conroy's eyeballs protruded. He gulped at the lump in his throat. Still he did not speak.

"Did you know, sir," the superintendent began timidly, "there was thirty-three thousand in stock now already with the lot we're just finishing?"

"Yes!" Day snapped. He picked up the Consolidated Electric Company contract from the table and ran the point of his finger down the first page. "We'll need a hundred thousand X-42's, and we might as well run them through first to avoid changing the machines. How many men do you need to give you a full force, Schwartz?" he abruptly demanded.

The superintendent, who under strict orders had been "holding everything down" for months, gaped stupidly as he cogitated.

"Well?" Day's impatience flared out.

"About a hundred and twenty-five, sir," Schwartz answered timidly. It was quite evident that he expected to be rebuked for the suggestion of an absurdity.

Day looked at Conroy with challenging eyes. The senior partner stared back dully, as if his wits were benumbed. His lower jaw hung loose and trembling.

"Hire them—quick!" Day ordered. He waved the superintendent out.

When the door latch clicked behind the amazed Schwartz, the junior partner jumped up from his chair and walked over to the senior. He clapped an emphatic hand on Conroy's shoulder.

"There's no use being cautious, Will," he said in a voice which, though resolute, was kind. "We'll have to padlock the safety valve and crowd on all the steam we can to make the grade."

A wan smile writhed on and off Conroy's lips like a tortured thing.

"We might as well die for a sheep as a lamb," was his philosophy of resignation.



NEXT morning on his arrival at the office, Conroy anxiously greeted his partner with, "Thought of anything yet?"

"No. 'Ve you?"

"Bust—with a friendly receiver to liquidate for us. Maybe we can save the pieces and patch them together afterward." Conroy tersely summarized the torturing thoughts of a sleepless night.

"Not much, Mary Ann!" the junior partner vigorously disagreed.

Day picked up a handful of shop orders and abruptly left the office, lest he be provoked to acrimony. He had not slept much himself, and Conroy's pessimistic fatalism was aggravating. Day's nerves were raw, and his partner was also his best friend.

A little after ten o'clock Day came into Conroy's office. Two hours of strenuous work in the factory had relaxed his mental tension. He was chipperly cheerful now.

"Will, let's go down to the bank and hear what they have to say," he suggested.

"Got any plan?" the senior partner asked eagerly, wonderfully encouraged by Day's smile.

"No."

Conroy's revived hope wilted like a greenhouse flower suddenly blighted by zero frost. He lifted himself out of his arm chair with the weak weariness of an old, breaking man.

"All right," he assented huskily. "But it's no use. We'll only be gloated over."

"Let 'em gloat," Day retorted. He jerked his hand in a gesture of scornful indifference. "That won't cost us anything. But for Heaven's sake don't make it easy for them by looking the way you feel! Act prosperous. And say, Will, let me handle Hart. I believe I can jump him until his valves suck sand."

"Just as you say." Conroy stared dejectedly into the black hat he had picked up from his desk. "Oh, well!" He put on his derby 'hind side foremost and followed Day out of the office.

Arrived at the bank, the junior partner strode aggressively to the cashier's desk. Conroy dragged behind. His best efforts to "act prosperous" resulted in his looking like a sick Great Dane trailing in tether.

"Howdy, Mr. Hart!" Day's big voice matched the hand he reached over the mahogany counter.

The cashier, without rising, grudgingly slid his own fingers forward six inches. Day grasped and crunched them. Conroy came up to the counter like a man walking in his sleep. His face was solemn as an undertaker's. He followed his partner's lead and grabbed Hart's palm as Day dropped it, and before the wincing owner had time to retrieve his afflicted member.

Conroy had just finished pumping funereal greetings out of his elbow when the younger member of the firm plumped at the cashier a breezily peremptory request.

"Mr. Hart, we want to see you a few minutes in private."

The bank official painfully wriggled the fingers of his right hand and scowled his resentment alternately at Day and Conroy. Then he took out his watch and looked significantly at the dial. His thin lips snapped over his pointed teeth in just the same way that the hunting-case of his watch clicked shut.

"Will ten minutes do you?" he asked curtly.

Day's reply was aggravatingly bland and condescending.

"Yes. Mr. Conroy and I are very busy this morning."

The cashier overlaid the rough surface of his unfriendliness with no thin veneer of pretended cordiality. He turned his hostile back on the partners, and with the aloof pomposity of a Mr. Bumble led them into the directors' room opening from the rear end of the lobby. There he shut the door behind his callers and waved loftily toward two uncomfortable, straight-back chairs.

He himself promptly sat in the cushioned throne with the leather-upholstered arms at the head of the directors' table. It was well known in Lakeport that Mr. Hart hoped some time to sit in the president's big chair at the official meetings of the board. His present pose of dignity and power ought to have awed the borrowers who sat before him now. But Conroy was looking at Day, and Day was intensely interested in the large art calendar on the wall over the fireplace.

"Well?" The cashier brusquely notified the firm of Conroy & Day that he was fully prepared to repulse any assault on the bank's funds. He looked again at his watch.

"We received your letter yesterday," Day began. His voice slurred off as if his mind had wandered from a matter of slight importance. He left his chair for another which looked less hard and stiff. After settling himself comfortably in the new seat, he resumed, as if there had been no interruption, "—And have come in to discuss the matter with you."

Hart darted a glance at Conroy, who sat imperturbable and stolid as a polar explorer frozen the whole length of his spine to the side of a cake of ice; yet paradoxically looking like a man sitting on a red-hot stove. The cashier, smiling grimly, shifted his eyes to Day.

"Pardon me," he said. The drawled

words were as cold as icicle drips. "There is nothing to discuss. You must arrange to pay your notes."

Hart dropped his soft white hand on the table top with a resounding thump of finality. His prominent Adam's apple climbed an inch higher above the furled sails of his narrow, rolling collar, and clung there like a ship's lookout at the mast head. Mr. Hart evidently was keeping a vigilant watch for breakers and rocks ahead.

"Of course we are to take up the notes," responded Day, entirely matter-of-fact. "That is perfectly understood. Your letter was quite clear, Mr. Hart. We want to ask a question or two, that's all."



HART visibly became more wary. He stiffened on his throne, all his suspicions alert. Day's features were indecipherable, so he turned again to Conroy and attempted by a fierce glower to gouge some clue out of the senior partner's thoughts. But Conroy, all his will-power concentrated on his desperate determination to show no sign of his inward quaking, sat stoic as a cigar-store Indian tortured by the nausea of a first smoke.

Baffled, Hart snapped his glare like a whiplash at the junior partner. Had Day's composure been less leathery, the darting look of suspicion would have stung through. As it was, when he spoke again after the brief pause, his voice was sharp. It prodded, as if he jabbed with a bayonet point at the cashier.

"Now, Mr. Hart, of course there is a reason back of the bank's refusal to renew our notes as was arranged when they were made. We should like to know what it is."

"It was explicitly stated in my letter," came the tart reply from the little-looking man sitting on tacks in the big chair.

"Oh, but the *real* reason, Mr. Hart!" Day's mellow tones had a tang of acid sarcasm. "For instance, no one has circulated any disparagement of our credit?"

The cashier's greenish eyes narrowed with cunning. He sniffed the air cautiously. His thin nostrils scented the trap.

"Certainly not!" he declared, with just the right amount of emphasis to indicate haughty resentment of the insinuation.

"You are absolutely sure you have heard nothing of the sort?" Day persisted. He leaned forward and transfixed Hart with a fierce look of menace.

"Absolutely." The cashier's answer was stout and spoken with hollow bluffness. His simultaneous writhing in his seat, however, indicated acute discomfort. His eyes yearned toward the door. Hart was like an ocean voyager beginning to be seasick in his close cabin, yet not daring to go out on deck.

"I didn't expect you to admit anything," said Day quite coolly. It was as if he had remarked in passing, "That's a lie." He went on:

"Another detail, Mr. Hart. This matter concerns only Conroy & Day and the bank. I suppose no third person or interest—a competitor of ours, for instance—has exerted any influence to have our notes called?"

The cashier blurted:

"Preposterous! You are insulting, Mr. Day!"

Hart's dignity was pricked so deep that he jumped out of his chair, smarting. A primly pompous pedagogue who had sat on an accurately aimed bent pin would have acted hurt in precisely the same way. Evidently realizing the futility of any attempt to lash Day with threatening words, he vengefully tried to bully the wooden senior partner.

"Mr. Conroy," he demanded, "am I to understand that you sanction these offensive innuendos?"

Conroy bent on Day a reproachful look which meant, "You *have* made a horrible mess of things now," yet promptly and with the reckless bravery of utter hopelessness seconded what his partner had said. Hollowly, as a suddenly vivified cigar-store Indian might be expected to speak, he gave counsel instead of an answer to the cashier.

"Don't lose your temper, Hart." The depth of gloom from which Conroy's voice came lent to his words all the effect of portentous solemnity. He caught Day's look of admiration for his supposed acute discernment, and tried to measure up to his partner's unspoken praise. "This is a serious matter," he warned the cashier, his eyes fixed accusingly on the bank officer's purple face. "A very serious matter. Keep cool, Hart! Keep cool!"

"I won't listen to another word!" cried the desperate cashier. He stamped across the room and back.

Day knew what worried Hart most was his inability to imagine any possible reason why he should be worried at all. The junior

partner accordingly prodded again from the dark.

"We are to understand, then," he rejoined calmly, "that you positively refuse to tell us why you are cutting off our credit?"

"Your credit *isn't* cut off," flared Hart trying to start a back fire. "The bank needs the money now—that's all. Great Scott! Don't you suppose anybody else has troubles besides yourself? Here's the whole country shivering with panic chills, and you ask why we want a loan paid! *We need the cash!* Can you understand that? We've got to have it. Our reserve is down to the legal limit now.

"You are not the only borrowers we have had to call. If we didn't do something to protect ourselves in a time like this, we couldn't meet our own obligations to our depositors."

The cashier, attempting to conceal the bank's real animus, hid behind a fine frenzy of indignation as a squid inks the water before its lair.

"That's always the way with you manufacturers," he fumed. "You think only of yourselves. You wouldn't care, except as it might involve Conroy & Day, if this bank went to smash, carrying you and others like you that are spread out too thin, sir—altogether too thin!" Here Hart's voice rose to a parrot screech. "We won't do it! In self-protection we *can't* do it!"

With a sudden, harsh twang in his tone, Day shot the barbed arrow of a sneer straight at Hart.

"Naturally you've called all the New Electrical Specialties Company loans, too?"

The cashier was apopleptic with rage.

"You are grossly impudent, sir!" he choked through foaming lips. "This interview is over. Get out!"

He strode to the door and theatrically flung it open. He stood rigid to one side.

"You heard all he said? You recall every word clearly?" Day questioned his partner as they arose from their chairs.

"Yes." The monosyllable was curt because Conroy was manifestly eager to escape. He looked as if he were suffocating, but he managed a glower at Hart. "I can swear to all of it," he affirmed, grimly vindictive.

"I think there is nothing more, then—now," Day soliloquized with an aggravating air of complete content.

"Good morning, Mr. Hart," he said very sweetly. "It's too bad. I'm really sorry."

He offered his hand as an old friend of the family offers silent commiseration to a mourner at a funeral. Hart uptilted his sharp chin so that it pointed straight over Day's head. He kept his inflexible grenadier pose at the door. Day shrugged his shoulders as one who abandons a fool to his fate, and, smiling his pity, left the directors' room.

Conroy trudged heavily after him. Acting his difficult part to the last, he stopped opposite Hart, slowly lowered a withering glare from the sleekly parted hair on the bank officer's round head, down a white vest and striped trousers, to a pair of large, too shiny shoes which all at once burned Hart's feet. Then Conroy shot his glance up at the cashier's blood-red face, sniffed twice, and clumped past him out of the door and into the lobby.

As the partners in sedate dignity went down the bank steps to the sidewalk, Day twisted the corner of his mouth to whisper, "Conroy, you're a brick."

The only response was a snort. The conversation lapsed.

The partners walked in silence to their factory. The instant they were safe in the privacy behind Conroy's office door, the senior member of the firm exploded.

"I stood by you, Day—blindly. But of all the asinine exhibitions I ever saw, your performance this morning was the prize donkey show. We *are* done for now."

Conroy slumped into his chair, took off his hat, and raised to Day a face sweating with anxiety. A mixture of agonized despair and resentful indignation oozed out of him.

"You don't exactly approve of my plan, then?" tantalized the junior partner.

He took a chair deliberately, and with every appearance of comfort leaned back. He locked his fingers behind his head and smiled. His eyes twinkled. Day was of the sort that never quite grow up from mischievous boyhood.

"Plan!" Conroy disgustedly derided. "Half an hour ago you hadn't any!"

"Correct!" Day admitted. "However, I've got one now."

"Tell me," his partner eagerly begged.

"N—no," the junior refused. For a moment Day was silent; he stared reflectively at the floor. "You wouldn't take any stock in it, anyway; and you'd probably say I'm

crazy. I tell you what, Will—you run over to Chicago and see what you can do with some of the big banks. Maybe we'll be able to borrow the money on the Consolidated Electric contract. It'll be time enough to try my scheme if you fall down."



THE next morning Conroy was bundled aboard the Chicago train.

Day did not expect that his partner would be able to arrange for a loan. The suggestion of the trip was only a ruse to get him out of the way for a few days. Day was sure that when the news of his firm's securing a large contract became known in Lakeport a fire of enthusiasm would run through the dull town. Conroy's wet-blanket presence would certainly smother it.

Day went to the depot with his partner. When the train steamed off, he hurried back to the factory. Ten minutes afterward Superintendent Schwartz posted a notice on the shop gate that Conroy & Day wanted one hundred and twenty-five men for steady work.

And that afternoon Mrs. Day, who had been duly coached in advance by her husband, made a friendly call on Mrs. Lemuel Barclay. Her ostensible purpose was the discussion of plans for Lakeport's approaching Thanksgiving dinner for the poor. She reported to Mr. Day at the supper table that in the course of half an hour's chat with the bank president's wife she had referred fourteen times, more or less incidentally, to the trip she was going to take to California after the holidays—not forgetting to mention a stopover at Marshall Field's in Chicago to buy two or three new gowns.

And somehow or other the Lakeport *Evening Press* gathered from an anonymous source a number of interesting items. With many repetitions of "It is expected" and "We learn with pleasure," these were grouped under a three-column head on the first page of the Saturday issue. Delighted subscribers read.

CONROY & DAY FACTORY TO DOUBLE ITS FORCE

Good News for Lakeport Workingmen and Merchants

And Lemuel Barclay, just as Day expected him to do, guessed what had not been disclosed to the public—the name of Conroy & Day's big contract customer. Day

knew when he met gloomy-looking Lemuel Barclay, Junior, carrying a suitcase toward the railroad station, that the general manager of the New Electrical Specialties Company was going to New York to find out if the Consolidated Electric Company business were irretrievably lost.

During the four days preceding the maturity date of the notes at the bank Day bustled busily about the factory and on the streets of Lakeport. He scattered optimism with both hands wherever he went. Only Hart and Barclay scowled in retort to his genial nod in passing.

The evening before the due day of the notes Day went back to the factory after supper. From the general office he carried a typewriter and some of the firm's stationery into his private room. There, behind locked doors, the forefinger of his right hand with awkward slowness picked out on the keyboard of the writing-machine the elusive letters forming the words of a brief paragraph.

He took the sheet out of the typewriter, read it carefully, then tapped laboriously on a second letterhead until he had typed another and longer paragraph. When both were completed to his satisfaction, he unstoppered his fountain pen and at the bottom of each sheet signed beneath the typewritten "Conroy & Day" a bold "James L. Day."

He carefully blotted the signatures, folded the sheets separately, and put them in a long envelope which already contained three note forms filled in. He stowed the envelope in his inside coat pocket. All this accomplished, Day lugged the borrowed typewriter back to its stand, put away the unused remainder of the stationery, and went home.

In his den that night he smoked three very black cigars in close succession to compose his nerves. As any novice knows, operating a typewriter for the first time is very exciting work.

About a quarter to nine o'clock next morning Conroy, flushed by a hurried walk from the depot and looking generally as if he had sat up all night in a smoking-car, dragged his valise into Day's office.

"How is everything, Jim?" he asked anxiously as he shook hands with his partner.

"Fine! We've got forty-three new men working and the output's climbing fast. How'd you make it? You don't look like

you'd had much luck." He grinned. No one would have guessed that it was a forced grin.

"Have you arranged a renewal?" Conroy's eyes shone with eagerness.

Day took the long envelope from his pocket and handed his partner the three notes he had filled out and signed. The two typewritten sheets he left in the envelope.

"You just endorse these and I'll see what we can do," he said enigmatically. Again he smiled—too broadly.

"Tell me——" the older man began.

"Haven't time now. We've got to hustle right over to the bank. Put your name on those notes, and *don't worry!*"

Conroy sighed his sudden relief.

"I couldn't beg, borrow, or steal a dollar in Chicago," he reported. "By George, it's a load off my mind to know you've got things fixed!" He sat down at the desk and with nervously trembling hands put on his spectacles. Then he scratched his signature on the back of the notes and returned them to Day.

The junior partner looked uncertainly at the senior. As he looked, the forced smile on his own lips faded. After a moment he spoke.

"Will!" Day's voice was strained and unnatural. "I haven't arranged a renewal. I haven't talked with anybody at the bank. It isn't right that you should be bolstered up with any false hopes. Our only chance is to go to Barclay and bluff him into giving us time."

Conroy's jaw dropped so far that his mouth hung open. It formed the zero to which his mercurial spirits had fallen. He gulped three or four times as if trying to swallow his disappointment. He touched his dry lips with his dry tongue. The resulting grimace proved the bitterness of the taste in his mouth.

"When did you think you'd go over?" he asked in a voice so faint that Day scarcely heard him.

"Right away, if you're ready. The sooner after the bank opens the better."

Conroy's florid face turned gray-blue. At first he looked like a man freezing; then all at once his numbed vitality seemed to crumble. He sagged and shrank in his clothes. They hung about him like wrinkled bags.

"Jim!" The tone was dead. The word was a shudder, like a ghostly, moaning wind.

"My nerve's all gone. You'll have to go alone. I'd try my best to help you, but I'd spoil our only chance if I should break down. I'm no good, Jim! I'm no good!"

Conroy's gray head tumbled on his convulsively twitching arms outstretched over Day's table.

It is a shameful, horrid sight—a strong man's spirit breaking. Another and a stronger man, seeing it, must needs mix a little contempt with his great pity lest contagious terror rack his own will of its strength. Day, though from his heart he was sorry for Conroy, yet could not help despising his partner just a bit. But almost immediately compassion conquered scorn. He went to the burden-crushed man and patted the heaving shoulders comfortingly, as brother would console brother.

"There, there, Will, old fellow!" he soothed. "You're all tired out. No wonder—the strain you've been under. I'm pretty near woozy myself. If you'd rather, I'll go down alone and talk to Barclay. Here!" He whirled to his desk and grabbed a handful of letters and orders. "That Consolidated Electric contract was only the bell wether. Since you've been gone, a lot of other sheep have come into the fold."

Conroy tried to dilute his misery with interest in the new business. The two elements would not mix.

"If—if only we——" he stammered. Then he broke down and openly sobbed.

"Now don't you worry." The admonition came from between Day's clenched teeth. "I'll make old Barclay eat those new notes. I'll be back in half an hour with the old ones, and you can tear them up."

Conroy slowly lifted his head and showed his slaty face furrowed with tears.

"It isn't on account of myself, Jim," he mumbled. "I could stand the gaff, even if I am past fifty. But the wife and children!"

Day was suddenly ashamed that for a minute he had been contemptuous of his partner.

"I understand," he said.

Because he understood, he said nothing else, but immediately left the office and started for the bank.



DAY knew that Barclay usually acidified the bank about the opening hour, stopping in on the way to his personal office farther down the street. This morning the president was standing

beside the cashier's desk, engaged in a low-voiced discussion with Hart, when Day briskly entered the lobby. Day crossed at once to the counter and spoke a breezy greeting when the two men behind it glanced up at him.

"Good morning, gentlemen!"

Day's face was broadly smiling. No one looking at him would have suspected that his high color denoted anything but exuberant health. The brightness of his eyes might naturally have been ascribed to complete contentment with the world and its usage of the firm of Conroy & Day—the junior partner in particular.

The bank president and cashier returned his salutation with two almost identical, jerky nods. Barclay's thin lips looked ready for either a sneer or a snarl. The twist depended on the errand that had brought Day to the counter.

"I believe our firm has a little matter of business to adjust with you today," the junior partner remarked smoothly. "Can you gentlemen oblige me with a few minutes in private?" Day significantly took from his pocket a long envelope.

Curiosity has trapped many mice and many men. Barclay hesitated, turned to Hart as if about to say that he himself was busy and would have to refer Mr. Day to the cashier, and actually opened the gate in the counter and led the way along the corridor to the directors' room. Day followed him, and Hart fell in at the rear. The representative of Conroy & Day had the sensations of a man being ordered and ushered out instead of one being conducted to the inner sanctum.

Hart saved the caller the necessity of seeing that the door was closed behind them. He latched it carefully and stood with his hand on the knob as if ready for instant egress. Barclay also stood. No attempt was made by either bank official to disguise the expectation that Day would state his business quickly and be as quickly answered. He understood the hostility manifest in their attitude, but gave no sign of resentment save in the harder glitter of his eyes.

"Mr. Barclay!" Day began. He ignored the cashier as a mere dummy and addressed himself to the head of the bank. "You doubtless have heard that our firm has received some large orders which will keep our factory busy all Winter?"

"I don't know anything about it!" snapped Barclay. "I never pay any attention to gossip."

"Well, it's true," Day declared evenly. He stepped closer to the old man. "It is true, also, that the Conroy & Day factory is the only one in Lakeport which has a prospect of being busy, working a full force of men."

"Is that all you came here to tell me?" Barclay rasped out. Impatiently waving his arms he made for the door.

Day, divining his purpose, brushed slower-witted Hart away from the knob and stood with his back to the exit.

"No," said he. "But I wanted you to bear those things in mind when I refer to the rest of my business."

"I shall not discuss any business with you, sir!" The hissing utterance of the words made a little foam on Barclay's lips. "Stand away from that door!"

The final roar did not budge the man barring the threshold.

"In a moment," he agreed. "I have something here which I want you to read first."

Day extracted from the envelope in his hand a typewritten sheet of paper, unfolded it, and handed it to the bank president. His mouth was very hard.

The old man angrily snatched the paper and glanced at it with contemptuous indifference. But the heading made his eyes pop out. Astonishment, incredulity, exultation—the expressions ran together as they raced across his face.

"Listen to this, Hart!" he cried. Then he read so fast that the words tumbled over each other as they hurried out of his cruelly laughing mouth:

"NOTICE OF ASSIGNMENT. The firm of Conroy & Day has this date made a voluntary assignment of all its assets to Martin P. Riggs, Trustee."

"CONROY & DAY, by JAMES L. DAY."

Hart was too astounded for speech. He gaped stupidly, looking like a stunned fish. Barclay wheeled to the cool, imperturbable man in front of the door.

"So all your prosperity was a bluff!" he sneered. "I thought so."

"No, you didn't," Day contradicted with pretended calmness. The sneer made his fingers fairly ache to smash the sardonic old face. "And nobody else in Lakeport thinks our prosperity is all a bluff. Merchants and workmen are counting on it.

We've got the contracts for the business, just as I told you. There's no bluff about it, any more than there is about this!"

His fingers leaped into his envelope as if he were drawing a dagger. He jerked out a second typewritten sheet and thrust it at Barclay. The act was so menacing that the old man involuntarily stepped back. He threw out his hand, less to receive the folded paper than to ward off an expected blow.

"Read it aloud!" thundered Day. "I want Hart to hear it, too."

Barclay appeared cravenly afraid. His lips were dry. His tongue, a minute before so swift and sure in sarcasm, stuttered now.

He read:

"NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC—The assignment of Conroy & Day to Martin P. Riggs, Trustee, is made because the firm is unable at this time to take up notes for \$25,000 discounted at the First National Bank. The cashier of the bank informs us that the First National's cash reserve is down to the legal limit and that unless the bank can call in some of its loans at once it will not be able to pay its depositors on demand. As we can not at this time comply with the bank's requirement, we are forced to assign our business.

"CONROY & DAY, by JAMES L. DAY."

Barclay instantly perceived the trap. A snarl of rage, the angry howl of a wild beast, tore from his throat.

"Hart, you fool, *did* you tell him that?" he demanded viciously.

"I—I—— We had a talk, as I reported to you last week, Mr. Barclay. I don't remember exactly what I said, but I think I did tell Mr. Day and Mr. Conroy that with times like this the bank has to protect itself."

The attempted justification ended in a weak stammer. Hart slunk a little away from his master like a dog cowering before a raised whip.

"Ugh-h-h-h!" No bear ever growled more fiercely than did the baited, trapped old Bruin of a man. He swung to Day. "So you're revengeful, are you?" he snorted. Then his tone cautiously dropped to a sniff. "You think you can cause us trouble. You hope you can break us down with a run on the bank. You can't! Before night I'll have a quarter of a million—a half million dollars here from Chicago. We're good as wheat. Yours is the only rotten loan of any size on our books. That for your spite work!" He snapped his long, yellow fingers in Day's face.

"But you won't last until tonight," re-

torted Day with a terrible air of certainty. "I'm going from here direct to the *Press* office, and shall give them a copy of those two notices. I'll tack other copies on our front door, then blow the whistle and send our employees all over town to spread the news." He pulled out his watch. "It is now eighteen minutes past nine. There'll be a heavy run before ten o'clock. By noon you'll be cleaned out of cash. There isn't a train from Chicago until three ten."

Day smiled confidently. He left the door and sat down in a chair.

"You wouldn't dare!" gasped Barclay, beside himself with anger and fear.

"Oh, wouldn't I, though!" Day laughed harshly. "If we go down, the First National goes too." He bit off the threat implacably. "Perhaps," he went on, "you can afford to get every merchant and workingman in town sore at you, Barclay. It may be worth your while to liquidate this bank at a big sacrifice of all your gilt-edge bonds and paper and with costly court and legal expenses, just to gratify your hatred of a business competitor. That's up to you."

"Conroy & Day can stand it if you can. The assignee is a good friend of ours. We'll be on our feet again in three months. We're sound, Barclay. Nobody knows it any better than you do."

In his excitement he had raised his voice. He lowered it now to a conversational tone.

"Don't you think it would be wiser all around if you took our notes for twenty-five thousand at ninety days? I have the renewals here all ready. Let's go back to work and say no more about the matter. I'll give you——" He studied the dial of his watch. "I'll give you until nine twenty-five to decide. Don't hurry yourself. Think it over."

With the impudence of a mischievous boy he crossed his legs, stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, and grinned genially.

His manner said without the necessity of words, "This is a good joke, and it's on you."

Barclay, as if some sinister wizardry had hypnotized him, was rooted to one spot on the carpet. In the space of a few seconds his face changed through the whole spectrum gamut of colors. Day could almost see the twisting, dodging thoughts trying to find a way out of the trap. The cunning old man fought his danger like a cornered rat, desperately. But he did not have the rat courage to die fighting. All his futile fury turned at last on Hart, crouching like a rabbit at the door. Barclay leaped at the cashier, shook and choked him.

"You—you—you——" He could not find an adequate epithet. "Take those renewals and cancel the old notes before I kill you!"



TEN minutes later Day slapped three canceled notes on Conroy's desk and fell limply into a chair.

"Whew!" he gasped. He wiped from his forehead big drops of sweat.

Conroy had blanched as his partner came in. The color crept back to his face when he saw the "paid" stamp on the notes.

"How did you do it, Jim?" he cried.

Day told the story, very briefly. He felt oddly weak.

"Barclay bluffed pretty strong," commented Conroy at the end of the recital. He chuckled. There seemed to be a chip on his shoulder now. "I guess he thought at first your threat to post those notices was a bluff, too."

Day's face looked haggard and unutterably tired.

"It was," he replied wearily. "I never could have smashed the bank to save ourselves, Will. If Barclay wasn't such an old scoundrel himself, he'd have called me cold."





The Taking of Peter Pan

by George
Brydges Rodney

NO, SON, I ain't never had what you might call no very good ner yet no very bad luck. Come to think of it, I don't believe in luck much nohow. It's all a question of how you handle your cards.

O' course, if you start in to play fifty-cent ante when you ain't got but a dime in your clothes, you won't be what you'd call popular in the game. I mind once a doctor who says to me when I was layin' in the Santa Clara Hospital cussin' my luck 'cause a boy shot me in the leg on the Fourth of July with a .22 rifle——

Oh, you don't think that was hard luck, hey? Let me tell you, son. To be shot with one of them derved little teasers is like puttin' tar on each hand an' then tryin' to pick a feather offen your finger. You can't get hold of it. This yere doctor feller he says to me:

"John Wilkes," he says, "don't you talk about hard luck. You won't know what real hard luck is till you have acute articular rheumatism an' Saint Vitus's dance at one an' the same time."

I've spent near twenty years tryin' to make my pile down here in the Southwest, an' every time I made a little pile, somebody else scooped it into his'n an' got away with it. I on'y remember makin' five hundred

dollars that was clear velvet, an' we got that by accident. That was down across the International Line in Sonora last year—— Thank you! I'll drink outen the bottom of the flask—— When! Blame it! You've spilled enough to make another one.



YOU know Broad-ax Smith. Well, me an' Broad-ax was huntin' in couples last Spring, prospectin' fer the Walters Syndicate. They had grub-staked us, an' we had wandered clear down into the Guaymas country huntin' fer copper, an' the only sign we saw of it was two copper cents that we'd carried outen the States with us, not bein' able to spend 'em in the Land of the Free.

We was camped on the headwaters of the Rio Matape, waitin' fer our burros to git rested up so we could work down into Guaymas, a hundred miles to the southwest, where we could ketch the railroad an' git back across the Line if we could find an American conductor who'd deadhead us through, 'cause we couldn't raise a fare between us. It took three days for them derved jackasses to rest up, an' when they'd done it, *we* was tired of waitin'; so we pulled our freights fer Pesquiera.

It was a mighty rough trail across country, an' the hills was covered with brush oak

an' piñon pine that was so thick an' prickly that when we got down into the valley we didn't have much left on our backs in the way of clothin' but our sombreros; an' we on'y had them on account of our carryin' 'em in our hands to bresh away the nasty little antelope flies that like to eat us alive.

I mind that what started the thing was the ol' lead burro boltin' back along the trail along about dusk. He come back heehawin' all the way, an' he come fast, too. An' as he come I seen a long black shadder lopin' along in the bresh for a matter of a hundred yards alongside of us, but I didn't pay no attention to it fer a bit. Broad-ax he was clearin' trail ahead. In a minute he come peltin' back, lookin' like he'd seen a ghost.

"John," he says, "what's big an' black, an' looks like a cat?"

"Look here, Broad-ax," I says, some casual, fer it was gittin' late, "this yere's no time to be askin' me your fool conundrums. A ton o' coal's big an' black an' I reckon you put the cat part of it in so's to make it hard. Git out o' here an' break trail. We want to git somewheres tonight."

"Not fer me," he says, an' I seen he was plumb scared at somethin'. "This yere's no time fer me to be out there in front of the other jackasses, wanderin' through strange country when a Thing like that's foot-loose—"

He p'inted to a patch o' wet sand along the creek side where we come outen the brush. I drew my breath hard an' looked again. There, right under my eyes in the wet sand, was a print as big as my two hands; an' some scratch marks, too, in the gravel. As soon as I seen 'em I knowed them prints. Anybody who'd ever seen 'em once couldn't mistake 'em. They was the claw marks of a jaguar, an' a whackin' big one at that.

Now when a jaguar comes down from the hills an' takes to wanderin' about the country by day it means that he ain't been gettin' full rations at home, an' that he's aimin' to rob somebody's pantry. You see, them jaguars an' mountain lions always go fer young colts fer choice. Generally they let cattle alone on account of them fightin' with their horns; an' the wool on the sheep an' goats bothers 'em, so they take the colts fer choice.

As I figured it out, the supply of colts bein' low by reason of the revolution that'd been runnin' fer three years an' all the

horses bein' confiscated, the darned Thing was hungry. Anyway, I looked at them claw-prints that Broad-ax showed me, an' I set down on a rock an' whistled. You see, we wasn't carryin' no arms with us on that trip on account of gettin' in trouble with the rebels if we was caught with 'em. Remember the old piece of po'try in school:

The empty traveler may whistle
Before the robber an' his pistol?

That's the way it was with us.

"It's ten good mile to Pesquiera," says Broad-ax presently. "We can't make it tonight with the burros tired out, an' I ain't covetin' none to spend the night in the open with that Thing playin' ring-around-the-rosy with us, with nothin' but stinkin' greasewood fire between us an' harm. What do you think, John?"

I'm thinkin' some hard about that time. "It looks to me, Broad-ax," I says presently, "as if that adobe *jacal*—hut—that we seen on the hill a half mile off to the west as we come down off the Ridge is the place that we're lookin' fer. Let's get over there."

We rounded up the jackasses an' hustled 'em up the hillside to the west. Nine times out of ten a burro won't hurry none, but this time they was puttin' their feet down hard an' fast; an' they like to stampeded when once the wind brought to us the long yell that when you've once heard you won't never forget. It sounds so much like a little child in pain.

We took that hill at a run an' we made that *jacal* in a half an hour, just as night was drawin' in. It wasn't much of a place, but it had a roof an' it had a door—of sorts; an' there was a kind of a dugout—a root cellar—dug in the slope of the hill behind the *jacal*. An' I tell you fair, that them burros was so glad to git in there an' have the door shut behind 'em that the ol' lead burro lifted up his voice in prayer when Broad-ax slammed-to the door an' pinned it.

There come another scream from the brush in the creek bottom, an' Broad-ax picks up the ax an' set to work cuttin' a lot of greasewood, which was the on'y wood there was on the hill.

"It's me fer a good fire tonight," he says. "We ain't got no guns, an' even if we did have 'em," he says, as he set down the fryin'-pan, "I wouldn't go huntin' of that darned tiger cat. I ain't lost no tiger cat. He ain't my tiger cat. Better come inside, John."

If you an' me sets outside with that spotted cattle thief wanderin' 'round in the brush, it'll be like puttin' a box o' candy in front of a Greaser kid."

So, though me an' Broad-ax ain't hardly what you might call *dulces*—sweetmeats—we went inside an' shut the door; an' durin' that whole night—an' I swear it lasted a week—we laid on the hard dirt floor of that *jacal* listenin' to that derved Thing paddin' up an' down around the dugout an' the house, singin' to itself.

Once it come to the door an' scratched at the earth under the sill, an' I found myself cyin' the thatch an' wonderin' if it was too thick fer me to break through if the beast come in at the door. Then we heard it throw itself against the door of the dugout, an' them jackasses all hollers out a vote of want of confidence. When daylight come we was shore played out.

Broad-ax, he says to me when we'd eat breakfast:

"I'm as tired as if I'd done a day's work already. I reckon we'd better make tracks fer Pesquiera as soon as we kin, when the sun gits up high enough fer that cat to go an' take his beauty sleep. I'm needin' mine, too," he says. "But I'm goin' to wait till I get to Pesquiera. I ain't figurin' none on havin' him manicure his nails on me. Come on."

When we took them burros outen the dugout I thought the ol' he one was aimin' to kiss me, he was that glad to see me; an' we didn't lose no time in swingin' the packs an' hittin' the trail.



NOW, Pesquiera was ten mile by trail if it was a inch. I've heard that the U. S. Infantry can march thirty miles a day—if they have to. Me an' Broad-ax didn't belong to no Infantry, but all the Infantry that was ever foaled would have looked like creepin' worms alongside of us; an' we hustled them asses along the trail at about a thousand miles an hour.

I tell you we was fair sweatin' when we topped the Ridge to the southwest of Tecoripa an' headed down to Pesquiera. The worst of it was—an' it give us heart failure every time it happened—that every few minutes that old lead burro would stop an' throw up his head an' sniff up wind like an old lady with a cold, an' then he'd bray an' start off at a trot that'd make me an' Broad-ax run to keep up with him. A tiger

cat'd make the best kind of a driver fer a burro pack train.

Pesquiera ain't no metropolis, but the whole darned place was alive when we got there. There must have been about five hundred people in the plaza, an' there was the gleam of white tents in the fields behind the town.

"Insurrectos again," says Broad-ax, groanin'. "My land! Can't we ever git away from 'em? We're like sheep," he says. "First the Huerta shearers catches us an' cuts all the wool offen us, an' now we gits the Carranza fleas on our stripped hides. I reckon we'll have to use some good old U. S. sheep dip to cure the whole — land," he says. "It's all flea-bitten. What's that, John?"

It wasn't no wonder he asked. There wasn't no rebel troops there at all. It was a lot of dirty canvas tents an' some painted wagons, an' whiles we set an' watched we seen a man come out an' climb up on a ladder an' set to work stickin' a big colored bill up on a blank adobe wall. Broad-ax sa'nters up an' asks him, casual like:

"W—What's the damage, friend? Advertisin' a lottery?"

The man shook his head, but answered nothin'.

"He's too proud to talk to a common man," says Broad-ax to me. Then he says to the man on the ladder, "Play like this is a Chautauqua meetin' an' you're—"

The man turns round an' spits a mouthful of tacks at him from the top of the ladder.

"See here!" he says. "Ain't you got no better sense'n to talk to a man with his mouth full of hardware? I might have swallowed a tack," he says.

"Well! Ain't you got a tack puller in your hand?" says Broad-ax. "What's that? A lottery bein' advertised?"

"No, sir!" The man spreads hisself some on the top rung. "This yere is the finest aggregation of the World's Wonders that's ever been got together. The Munson Monumental Mammoth Show," he says. "The biggest collection of animals in captivity, an' the best circus out of the United States. Five rings in one," he says, winkin' at me. "Step up, gentlemen, an' secure your tickets for the afternoon performance. Doors open prompt at two o'clock. Procession an' parade beginnin' prompt at one p. m. Where'd you-all come from?"

"We been prospectin' up in the hills, tryin' to git enough cash to buy a ticket to your show," says Broad-ax. "Land's sake! Is that another?" he asks, fer the man was busy stickin' up another bill alongside the first. The second one was writ in Spanish an' began in big red letters. Here's the United States fer it:

LOST! \$500 REWARD!

The magnificent tame jaguar belonging to this Company escaped from her keeper yesterday near Tecoripa. \$500 will be paid for her return. The animal is of the largest size. In spite of her ferocious appearance she is as gentle as a kitten. Answers to the name of Marie. Can be approached and handled without any danger. Reward will be paid on delivery.

I looked at Broad-ax, an' Broad-ax he looked at me. We both set down—hard.

"Where did you lose that 'ere animal?" asks Broad-ax presently.

"Up by Tecoripa," says the man. "She was bein' took to water, an' to get some exercise, by her keeper, when a Chihuahua dog skeered her, an' she jumped off into the brush——"

"Do you mean to say," says Broad-ax, "that you turn them ferocious animals out in the country? Why, man, she might snap up a little child like a cat does a mouse!"

"Not one of these yere Greaser child's," says the man, grinnin'. "Besides that, ain't I just told you that she was skeered by a Chihuahua dog? She ain't got but four teeth in her head. She kin claw some when she's upset, but she can't bite none. We have to feed her on malted milk," he says. "W'y, the trained goat run her outen the ring at San Blas——"

"Come on, John," says Broad-ax. "We got our business to 'tend to."

"What business?" I asks him, as we went off to our pack train, fer I was wishful to see them animals. He says nothin', but pushes me down the street.

"Don't you see?" he says. "Oh, my life! An' you was as bad skeered as the old he burro was. I'm naturally ashamed of you, John. We both of us plumb forget that the human eye has a certain power over dumb beasts. If we'd knowed last night what we know now about that cat, we'd be five hundred dollars ahead of the game. Got a dollar, John?"

He knowed I didn't have no dollar, but I give him the last two cents that we had, 'an

he went off an' come presently with a goat that he was leadin' by a string.

"We'll leave the burros herded here on the plaza," he says. "I reckon, John, that if we get back to that *jagal* tonight, we'll have a good show to earn the five hundred dollars reward. You see, if that cat is still hangin' 'round where we cooked our bacon, maybe we kin ketch her. I ain't long on ketchin' wild animals, even when they *are* tame; but when she ain't got no teeth an' was scared by a Mexican dog, an' is fed on malted milk an' answers to the name of Marie, I'll take a chance on it. Come on, John. We'll git a couple of ropes an' pull out."

We done better'n that. We had a plenty of bacon an' hard bread in the packs, an' we swapped some of it fer the loan of a couple of ponies an' lariats an' set off up the trail that we had sweated over an hour before. An' on the way up we shore cussed out that show fer the scare that we had the night before.

"I never knowed what it was to be plumb scared before," says Broad-ax. "But I don't mind informin' you, John, that last night I was just a leetle bit nervous. How'd we best tackle this thing?"

"Well," I says, "I ain't no Paul B. Du Chaillu, an' I ain't long on walkin' up to this yere Sweet Marie thing an' pattin' her on the head an' sayin': 'Good doggie! Come on!' The man says she's got four teeth left, an' he says that she kin claw some when she's upset. Maybe somethin's upset her."

"Er, she may have a few teeth left that this yere keeper person don't know nothin' about," says Broad-ax. "I'll tell you what we'll do, John. When we git about three miles from the *jagal*, we'll kill the goat an' drag it along the trail up to the house, an' then lay a scent all around the house an' put the goat inside. If Marie is anywhere inside of three miles of the place, she'll smell it all right. I kin smell it about two miles myself," he says, sniffin'. "An' then when she comes inside the house to get it, we'll ketch her——"

"Speakin' to her gentle," I says. "An' bein' derved keerful not to use no words that'll maybe upset her——"

"Settin' on the rafter," says Broad-ax, firm-like, "an' usin' these yere lariats that was brung along fer this special purpose. Kin you beat that plan, John?"

I couldn't an' I said so. When we got

about three miles from the shack we killed the goat, him objectin' considerable. Ten minutes later I knowed that if Marie was partial to the smell of goat she was just as liable to track me er Broad-ax as she was the goat.

When we come to the house, Broad-ax trailed the body of that goat all around the clearin', an' comin' back, set down on a rock. We set there for maybe a hour, Broad-ax tryin' to coax me to stay down on the floor of the *jacal* with a piece of string that I was to tie around Marie's neck when she come, if she did come, an' speak to her gentle like I was her keeper.

"What we'd ought to have brung is a bottle of malted milk," he says, "but o' course there was none to be had in Pesquiera. An' if we had asked the circus people fer it, it would have give the whole thing away, an' they'd have caught Marie themselves, an' we wouldn't have got no reward." So we had to do the best we could with what we had.



WHEN dark come, we put the two ponies in the dugout an' dragged that ol' goat around the house again an' then into the room itself; an' then Broad-ax an' me climbed up on the long rafter that run clear across the room about ten feet up. It was hard climbin', but I got a lariat over the log an' h'isted Broad-ax up, an' he helped me. An' a half hour later we was seated hook-legged over the sharpest log I ever set on, chewin' hard bread an' cold bacon, for Broad-ax wouldn't light a fire fer fear that if Marie was within smell of it, it'd skeer her.

We set there fer three mortal hours before we heard a sound. Then we heard a pony scream in the dugout, an' another scream answerin' it that near made me fall offen the log.

Broad-ax punches me in the ribs an' like to knocked me offen the rafter.

"There she is," he says. "Hear her?"

"Marie don't seem none attractive to me, while she's whisperin' like that," I says. "Maybe she's upset. Come to think of it, Broad-ax, it sounds mighty like she is. She ain't my cat. I don't believe I want her. Let's let her alone, Broad-ax."

"Five hundred dollars," says Broad-ax, mighty firm; an' against the light of the open door I seen him coilin' up the lariat an' settlin' the loop.

I said nothin'; but I done the same, wonderin' all the time what was goin' to happen. I derved soon found out. Four times we heard Marie paddin' around outside the hut, an' then she come to the open door an' stuck her head inside an' took a look around. Her head was as big as a big bucket, an' her eyes was gleamin' green an' nasty-like, with a queer kind of a green light behind 'em. Not in 'em—if you know what I mean. It was mighty clear to me that Marie was considerable upset.

She looked around two or three times, an' then she padded her way into the room. I reckon, now that I think of it, that it was the strong smell of the goat that kep' her from noticin' the smell of man that most animals are so quick to pick up. Anyway, she come fair into the room, an' Broad-ax punched me in the ribs an' signed to me that I was to rope her hind quarters, while he'd take the head.

We shortened the loops, an' when she was almost under us, we threw. Both ropes went home all right, for me an' Broad-ax kin rope any foot you want of runnin' cattle at a gallop. An' then we snubbed the lariats home on the rafter.

The next minute I was settin' on the floor in a pile of busted wood with that derved big cat on top of me, an' Broad-ax was whoopin' around us both.

"Ketched her!" he says. "Ketched her! Whoa, Marie. Keep still," he says, "till I tie this nice bit of a tree in your mouth. Even if you ain't got but four teeth, I ain't allowin' to be gummed up none."

An' he got a two-foot piece of wood in her mouth an' tied it fast around her jaws an' the back of her head so she couldn't do nothin' but swing her head like a scythe, an' growl, an' spit. An' all the time I was rubbin' the top of my head an' Broad-ax was stretchin' the lariats hard an' fast so's to keep Marie stretched out heel an' toe, front an' hind legs tied together an' swung from the posts on the opposite sides of the *jacal*.

The whole rafter had fetched away with us, an' I was some shook up an' couldn't do nothin' but hunt fer busted bones while Broad-ax tied Marie up with a piece of raw-hide from front to hind foot, tightened the stick in her jaws, an' tied another piece of thick wide hide about her neck fer a collar. Then he took the two lariats from the rafter an' tied 'em to the collar an' says to me:

"Come on, John. We've got her. We'd

better hit the back trail while she's under control."

She didn't look to be under no control whatever, but I went an' got the ponies; an' maybe we didn't have a holiday gettin' them to stand fer it.

It wanted an hour of daylight when we got started off down the trail in the late moonlight. First come Broad-ax, fair draggin' Marie at the end of his lariat an' her settin' back an' pullin'; then come Marie, spittin' like a pack of firecrackers an' settin' each claw in the gravel of the trail, an' then me, keepin' my lariat stretched taut to her hind legs to keep her from jumpin' on Broad-ax's pony when she went ahead.

It took us five mortal hours to git down that trail that it took a bare two to go up, an' we was shore wore out when we topped the low ridge above the *pueblo* an' seen the people gathered in the plaza. It was then that Broad-ax, who's always long on playin' to the galleries, says:

"John, it'll shore make us look like thirty cents to take this yere old lady into the town tied up like a Christmas package. She ain't got but four teeth, an' she feeds on malted milk an' was chased outen the circus ring by a hairless Chihuahua dog. I'm goin' to lead her in with a rope around her neck. I ain't goin' to have these yere show people give me the horse laugh," he says.

I begged him not to do it, but he would have his way; an' while I was standin' by my pony tightenin' the latigo, he unties the rope offen her feet, casts loose my lariat, picks up the bight of his own an' passin' it around his waist, ties it fast. He had sense enough not to take the stick outen her jaws.

For just about a minute Marie laid there in the dust of the trail, studyin' what new devilment was happenin'; an' then, when Broad-ax puts the toe of his boot in her ribs to pry her into startin' she come loose all of a sudden an' made one big leap down the trail headin' fer town.

Marie must have weighed near five hundred pounds, an' Broad-ax tips the scales at a hundred an' sixty. He went down that trail just barely touchin' his toes, an' swingin' from side to side like the tail of a kite. I seen she was headin' fer town, so I climbed into saddle, an' fair bustin' with laughin', I spurred the pony into a gallop.

I rode my darnedest, but I never would have caught up with 'em if it hadn't been

fer a big mimosa tree. Marie was takin' leaps as big as the crossin' of the Rio Grande del Norte; an', as I said before, Broad-ax's toes wasn't hardly touchin', goin' downhill ten foot to the step, when she took one side of the tree an' he took the other.

That old lariat snapped 'round the tree like a chain, an' Marie an' Broad-ax whirled past each other on the downhill side, snap-pin' like the last figure of a ol'-time Virginia reel—me bustin' with laughin' on my pony, an' the show people all cheerin' the race, an' the Greasers crossin' themselves in the plaza by the church.

"G—g—g—" says Broad-ax, when she whirls him off again. "You—fool—"

That was all he could say that was right plain.

"G—g—g—"

Then he shut up, by reason of Marie draggin' him across the place where we had our camp the night before. He took the slope on his face an' scraped through the old fire, his hand landin' on the big fryin'-pan that he'd left on the fire the night before when he cooked supper.

I like to died with laughin'. Him an' Marie was shore a sight.

Marie come at him again, an' he smashed her over the head with the fryin'-pan; an' the bottom of it bein' rusted nigh through, it punched right out. An' the two of 'em started off downhill again till they was stopped by an old stump.

"G—g—g—get a g—g—gun, you — fool, an' help—me—let—go," says Broad-ax, settlin' his feet in a root. "Don't you see it ain't Marie? It's a perfect stranger to me! Look at his teeth!"

Then I seen what Broad-ax seen when he started downhill—that that cat had a whole mouthful of long teeth.

I didn't have no time to be scared, for just then the lariat broke an' they started downtown different ways. As luck would have it, the animal cages was drawed up in the open square an' the door of the biggest cage was open. An' there, settin' in the cage like a big cat at home in her own kitchen, lappin' malted milk outen a big pan, was the biggest jaguar that I'd ever seen. It was Marie.

Broad-ax's friend made one break fer the cage door, an' the man in charge of it had sense enough to slam it shut. Then the town broke loose.

The owner of the show come rearin' out,

an' all the Greasers in town come up jabberin' an' all talkin' at once, while I was arguin' with the man who owned my pony an' Broad-ax was pinnin' up the seat of his pants what he'd coasted downhill on.

"Great land o' Goshen!" says Mr. Munson, the owner of the show. "Where'd you get this tiger cat?"

"I brung him down from the mountains," says Broad-ax. "He's some troublesome. Do you want to buy him?"

"How much do you want for him?" says Mr. Munson.

"Five hundred dollars an' a pair o' pants," says Broad-ax.

"Done," says the man, pullin' out his pocketbook an' countin' out the money. "What's his name?"

"Name?" says Broad-ax, borrowin' a pin from the Fire Eater's wife. "Am I a god-

mother to a whole tribe of cats? After I caught the — thing can't you *name* it fer yourself? All I know is that it ain't Marie!"

"I would suggest," says a old man, comin' out from the dressin'-tent with his forefinger between the pages of a book that he'd been readin', "that you name it——"

He goes over to the cage, an' takin' hold of the fryin'-pan tries to twist it off.

"I would suggest," he says again, "that considerin' the kind of ornament that he wears around his neck, that we name him—Peter Pan," he says, twistin' the fryin'-pan off an' throwin' it on the ground.

An' that's what they called him—Peter Pan."

And to my embarrassment, Mr. Wilkes looked steadily at me as he returned the flask.



THE Manager stood at the door of the dressing-room. Contrary to the usual concept of managers, he was tall and angular, and he wore a long Prince Albert that made him appear more so. His high silk hat was perched askew on his head. From behind he looked like a black bottle with the

cork in crooked. He was smiling amusedly.

A group of chorus girls in every stage of undress stood around a small flyaway figure. She held a leather bag in one hand while she gesticulated freely with the other. For fully ten minutes she had entertained them with a succession of anecdotes—mostly personal—which kept them tittering.

Her manner was breezy and full of a naive impudence.

She had not yet broached the subject of her business. She let curiosity mount as one waits for a kettle to boil.

"And the minister's sister, she says to me one day, 'I declare, Bobby' (that's the pet name they give me down our way—here I'm 'Miss Demonstrator'), 'I declare,' she says, 'sometimes I think you'd make a fine minister's wife—you've such a good heart. And then again I think you'd ought to be on the stage—you've got such handsome legs!' So I says, 'If that's the case I'll go in an' let your brother decide'—he was one o' these here serious men, spiritual an' a bachelor.

"She says, 'Bobby! You'll never do such a thing!' 'Indeed I will,' I says. An' with that I got a past her an' flew up the hall to his study. I burst in without knockin'—I knew him well, an'—land! I was always teasin' the life out of him! An' there he set writin' his sermon an' lookin' up to heaven like the pictures of St. Cecilia at the pianer."

"So I begun at once with what I come for. I says, 'Your sister don't know if I'd better marry a minister (like you, Doctor), 'cause I've got such a good heart; or whether I'd better go on the stage an' show off my handsome legs, so I've come in to git your opinion.' An' with that, I up with my skirts a mite an' takes a turn 'round the room to give 'im a chanct to see 'em all sides.

"An' he took one look. The St. Cecilia pose come off of 'im like you'd strip the skin off'n a banana. 'Put down your clothes!' he says, wavin' his hand. 'Now you know better, Bobby, than to act so before me,' he says very stern.

"Up he gits an' opens the door an' grabs me by the shoulders and boosts me through. Oh, that minister was an awful spiritual-minded man," she sighed reminiscently, "but when I looked back he was smilin' like everything."

Here, as if inadvertently, she raised her skirts and did a few steps in the limited space.

The girls snickered—held back politely—then laughed till they cried, leaning on each other's shoulders in the helplessness that comes with extreme hilarity; for though a slim little proposition as far as her figure went, Miss Demonstrator had legs as stout and seemingly as hard as those which underpin a grand piano.

The Manager roared, tucked his cane under his arm, and beat with his gloves on the palm of one hand. "If you'd do a turn like that out front—" he began.

"Forgit it!" she retorted, making an impudent face at him.

She dumped her satchel on the floor and sliding down after it drew out handfuls of tiny sample jars and bottles, which she flung about for the girls to scramble after.

The Manager disappeared with a quiet chuckle.

A languid blonde trailed over from her dressing-table, wiping the cold cream off her face as she came.

Miss Demonstrator's eyes twinkled, but she took no notice of the girl till the blonde was close to her. Then she looked up with an obvious start.

"My!" she ejaculated half under her breath. "You've got the possibilities of a gr-a-and skin if you'd use the right things on it."

The blonde shrugged her slim shoulders and picked a thread off her pink kimono.

Miss Demonstrator put both hands on her knees and continued to stare in frank admiration. Her keen intuition had singled this one out as "the leadin' knocker of the bunch." If she could land her—

"You're a dandy looker, all right," Miss Demonstrator went on guilefully, "but no one 'ud 'a' knowed it las' night out front, with the way you was whitewashed. Land! you looked like a frosted weddin' cake."

"Cut it out," drawled the fair one languidly, smothering a too-obvious yawn. "Cut it out and get down to biz. What've you got there better'n what I use?"

A smile darted across Miss Demonstrator's face and was gone—she had her start. Instead of answering she dived into her bag and drew out a small jar.

"Come on over here an' let me make you as good a looker as you'd ought ter be," she suggested, rising and going to the dressing-table.

The blonde hesitated.

"Aw, come on, Rosalie," the girls chorused, "and let her do it."

They trooped across the room, half pushing, half dragging her to the toilet table.

Rosalie sat down unwillingly. Her hair was pinned out of the way of her oily ablutions; Miss Demonstrator twisted it still higher and fastened it with an extra hairpin. Opening the jar, she disposed a thick layer

of its contents over the girl's face and said—
 "Now let that stay on a minute while I git the next thing."

She dived into her bag again and brought forth a bottle of pale pink liquid with a sediment. This she shook up till it clouded, then she turned to Rosalie and wiped the cream off her face with an air of authority that was convincing.

"Now," she went on, pouring the pink stuff on a bit of cotton batting, "you want to pat this here on. Don't rub or you'll git wrinkles."

The other girls leaned close with arms intertwin'd, swaying as if to an inaudible tune. Miss Demonstrator worked swiftly and with a deft touch. Presently she stepped back a pace with half shut eyes.

"Pretty good so far," she announced judicially. "Now for the color."

Rosalie glanced into the mirror. Her face was like a lovely marble mask, but there was no sign of powder on it, nor of that liquid whitewash effect which had roused Miss Demonstrator's ire. She bridled a little and looked sidewise at the other girls. They were as absorbed as students at a surgical clinic.

Miss Demonstrator kept up a running fire of comment as she worked, but she carefully avoided jokes at this stage of the game. She did not propose to sidetrack her serious business with laughter.

She placed a row of tiny bottles on the table and proceeded to the rest of the make-up almost as quickly as one could tell of it. Then before the girls could glimpse the result, she pulled the pins out of Rosalie's hair and let it down in a thick curtain over her face. Her brows puckered a moment; then she got to work with the comb and brush. For the next few minutes she combed and fluffed, patted, stroked and tucked hairpins into the golden mass.

Then, with a quick change of manner, she turned the girl round to face the onlookers.

"There now!" she exclaimed crisply. "What do you think of her?"

"O-o-h!" they breathed.

Envy would come later. Now they were all admiration; it came out frankly with no admixture.

Rosalie was impressed. She looked from one to the other. Miss Demonstrator put both hands on the slim shoulders and whirled her around the other way.

"Have a peek at yourself," she advised.

"It won't cost 'you nothin' for a look-in."

Rosalie gazed into the mirror a long minute. A smile of satisfaction stole over her face. One would have sworn she purred.

"Say," she averred, "that ain't half bad. I'll buy some of all your things."



SOME thirty minutes later, Miss Demonstrator gathered up a limp bag from the floor, having sold all it contained.

"Gee!" she exclaimed regretfully, "I wisht I'd brought a wheelbarrow along. I ain't seen the Johnnie boys of the show yet."

At the door of the room she ran into a tiny boy coming in the other direction.

"Hello!" she ejaculated, putting out a hand to steady him. "Are you playin' the high joo-ven-yle in this here shebang?"

He looked up into her face. A smile crept over his own, making a round dimple in one cheek and showing the edges of his little white teeth.

"No," he returned, "I'm not playin' anything. I'm lookin' for motha."

One of the girls came forward and took his hand.

"Come, honey," she said. "Mother's lying down in her room. You stay with me till she gets up."

Miss Demonstrator fumbled in her limp bag.

"I believe," she began, holding the child's eyes with her own, "I believe I've got a sample bottle of perfume for a boy of your size. And if you are the only boy in these diggin's, why you'll have to have it."

She took the cork out of a tiny bottle as she spoke and presented it to him with a flourish.

A loud-voiced, red-haired girl swung across the room.

"Say, Daisy, did you say Pat's sick?"

Daisy made a face of disgust.

"Yes, she's been crying ever since rehearsal this morning. I bet he's been mean again—he has her half crazy!"

The child sat down on the floor and began to spill the perfume over his brown Holland blouse. He was like a grave little prince out of fairyland, with his fair curling hair, bobbed as befitted his years, his big serious brown eyes, and the singularly beautiful expression of his mouth.

"Well," announced the loud-voiced one, wagging her head sagely, "I'd never earn

any man's living for him; but if I did he'd have to be——"

"Sh!" warned Daisy. "Here's Patty right now!"

A young girl stood on the threshold. She was small even for the "pony" class. Her dark hair had fallen down about her shoulders. Her cheeks, as olive as a Spaniard's, were flushed with color.

Her deep brown eyes showed traces of past tears, but she smiled bravely. One small hand caught the scarlet kimono close about her throat.

The little boy scrambled up off the floor and ran to her.

"Motha," he cried joyfully, "just see what she gave me!"

He reached up and held the bottle for her to smell.

She smiled at Miss Demonstrator over his head in a friendly fashion that won that matter-of-fact person at once.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, "how good somebody was to you. And did you say, 'Thank you,' Roddy?"

Before the youngster could reply the Manager popped his head in at the door.

"Half an hour before the first act!" he sang out and passed on, blowing his whistle twice as he went.

Bedlam ensued. The chorus girls had been using the three dressing-tables one after another in a sort of irregular turn. Four unfortunates still waited about, fixing their hair haphazard, and taking a peep into the mirror wherever they could catch it. Two girls began to quarrel loudly over the possession of a brush and comb. One hit the other on the fingers with it. In a moment they were in a hand-to-hand scrap, spitting out savage epithets and uncomplimentary names at each other. The vocabulary of the average burlesque girl is rich in such trifles. The noise of the conflict waxed till it sounded like the monkey cage at the zoo.

Miss Demonstrator backed into the hall. "These here family scenes!" she murmured, and disappeared.

At the stage door she stopped to talk a moment with the doorkeeper. It is well to be on good terms with that personage—and she intended to call again.

"I see you've got the same good old kind of dust round here in New York as we've got down our way," she observed chattily, rubbing a smudge off her velvet sleeve.

The man smiled indolently. "That kind of dust lies around pretty thick," he returned. "But the other kind of dust is as scarce as ever it was," he added meaningly.

"Oh, I don't know," she responded easily, tossing a silver dollar on the bench before him. "These here cart wheels seem to be lyin' round loose all over the town if you want to look for 'em. There's one for a sample."

The doorkeeper pocketed it with a grin. "Thanks, I don't care if I do," he remarked. "How did y' git along in there?"

He jerked his head toward the interior of the theater.

Miss Demonstrator shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, so-so," she answered without enthusiasm. "Who's the little dark girl with the baby boy?"

The man considered a moment.

"Oh, that's Patty Primrose—Mrs. Rodney Van Alstyn. She's married to a swell as was cast off by his own father because he married a actress. She does the joovenyles in the company. He's a dub—can't do nothin' fur a livin', an' won't let *her* make one in peace."

Miss Demonstrator sat down on the bench and swung her legs with an air of meditation.

"How's that?" she queried.

The man picked up a straw from the floor and chewed it viciously.

"Drunk," he answered. "Drunk most of the time, an' crazy jealous the rest of the time."

"H'm," she commented, throwing into the single syllable so much sympathy that the man continued:

"An' the worst of it is that old man Van Alstyn is trying to git possession of the kid on the grounds that a burlesque girl ain't fit to bring 'im up. Huh! Look at how he brought up his own son! She couldn't do much worse."

He spat on the floor and rubbed his foot over the mark.

Miss Demonstrator arose leisurely.

"Well, so long!" she said, and picking up her bag passed into the street. She came back as an afterthought and popped her head in at the door.

"I'll be in again," she told him.

"All right," he assured her, "you can always git a-past me."



IT WAS only a few days afterward that walking briskly along a street uptown she spied a little brown-clad figure that looked familiar. It loitered and finally sat down on a brownstone step.

Miss Demonstrator quickened her pace till she came opposite.

She bent over the drooping little figure and asked, "Aren't you Roddy Van something?"

The boy shook his head.

"No," he answered soberly, "I'm Roddy Van Alstyn."

Miss Demonstrator suppressed a grin.

"How's the perfume?" she asked.

He looked up and smiled till the round dimple grew in his cheek, and the edges of the tiny white teeth showed.

"It's all gone," he returned, "but I've got the bottle."

Miss Demonstrator scanned the house on whose steps he sat.

"Is this where you live, sonny?"

He wriggled with embarrassment.

"No, I'm losted. Motha has a headache, an'-an'-I came out to play. I can find my house when I get rested."

Miss Demonstrator considered a moment. Then she had an inspiration. Two blocks away she had passed a greengrocer's shop. There were not many in the neighborhood. Perhaps the tradesman would know where the boy belonged.

"Shall I carry you?" she asked.

"No," he returned stoutly. "I'm too big to be carried—I'm five, goin' on eight," he added, with a fine disregard for arithmetic.

He tucked his small hand into hers.

It happened that the greengrocer did know where Roddy lived. It was up a great many stairs; but the boy, forgetting his fatigue, ran ahead, talking all the way. When he reached the door of the room, he went on tiptoe in case "motha" was still asleep. But "motha" was wide awake, hastily putting on her outdoor things to go and hunt for the lost boy.

He ran to her arms and she gathered him up in a very passion of mother-love and relief. And her warm gratitude to the good Samaritan left nothing to be desired.

Now Miss Demonstrator had been in the rooms of many chorus girls, burlesque and otherwise. She knew well the usual style of them—photographs and flaming posters, sofa cushions made of cigar ribbons, curlingtongs in conspicuousness, and an air of

feverish haste that permeated the atmosphere like a cheap perfume.

Here was none of that. The two tiny rooms were austerity itself, from the plain muslin curtains at the windows to the bare floors specklessly clean and garnished with a few dark rugs. The furniture was simple and scanty—no stuffed sofas or plush chairs. It might have been the guestroom in a monastery. Miss Demonstrator looked about her with the greatest interest. She began to see the reason why even the tough men in the company refrained from "getting gay" with Patty Primrose. There was, under all her sweet buoyancy, a spirit as strong as a man's, a morality that knew right and wrong—and nothing between. The flame of her soul burned straight and high, the sport of no fickle wind.

Not that the flyaway vender of toilet specialties put it just that way to herself—by no means. She merely looked around the living-room with its plain furniture, at the little white beds in the chamber beyond, at the small alert figure beside her and murmured inwardly, "Pat's dead straight—that's sure!"

Some books lay on the table. They looked pedagogic. Miss Demonstrator picked one up as she talked.

"Why, sonny," she exclaimed in surprise, "are you as far ahead as this?"

Roddy shook his head.

"No, I'm only in the primer, but I can read most all the words."

Patty blushed hotly all over her little dark face.

"They're mine," she admitted. "I never had much schooling—I wish I had now—and when we're on the road, Roddy can't go to school. So I study and teach him as well as I can."

There was something in Patty's face, ashamed yet brave, that made Miss Demonstrator take it between her hands and kiss both cheeks.

"You're a game little sport, Patty!" she whispered.

Before she left, Miss Demonstrator piled on the table all the samples she had with her—creams, powder, rouge, perfumes and toilet water. She was "that tired luggin' 'em 'round, that if Patty didn't take 'em, she'd chuck 'em in the first gutter she come to."

The poor little rooms had shown her why Patty had never bought anything of her—

why she used cheap things that were roughening her pretty skin. The chorus girls bought lavishly of her, while Patty with a part—though a small one—was too poor to indulge in the pretty things, the perfumed trifles that they considered so lightly.

After this introduction to the little home she was a frequent visitor, for Patty, finding she could no more check the generosity of "Demmy" (as Roddy called her) than persuade Niagara to stop flowing down its precipice, tried to make it up in another way—by various hospitable "stunts" that cost little but meant much to the flyaway traveler.

As was to be expected, Miss Demonstrator came to know Patty's husband by sight and—one might almost say—by smell. Often the odor of whisky permeating the upper hall made her turn and go quietly downstairs to spare Patty the shame of having any one see Rodney Van Alstyn lying dead drunk on the couch, or crazily accusing his wife of infidelities as far from her nature as the east from the west.

A photograph of the old gentleman—severe, aquiline, aristocratic—adorned the mantel shelf. He seemed more like a High Church bishop than a financier. Miss Demonstrator was moved one day to ask questions about him.

"No," Patty answered slowly, "Mr. Van Alstyn has never seen me."

Then with a sudden flash of anger, "But he is perfectly sure that I am not the person to bring up his grandchild—burlesque girls are always bad!"

Miss Demonstrator reached out and gave her a great bear hug.

"The old idgit!" she ejaculated disrespectfully. "What do you care what he thinks!"

"It isn't only what he thinks," Patty returned earnestly. "It's that he is trying to take Roddy away from me. If he ever succeeds——"

She stood rigid, staring straight before her. An expression grew in her face that it frightened Miss Demonstrator to see.

"Forgit it!" she counseled soothingly.

But Patty's look lingered uncomfortably in her memory.

"His lawyer came to see me the other day," Patty went on in a low tone. "I hate him. He looks like a sanctified mouse."

"We'll chase 'im to his hole then," Miss Demonstrator made spirited answer. "Or

do like the Manager done to the snoopin' gumshoe man he caught tryin' to spy on you the other night—picked 'im up by the slack of his britches and slung 'im out on the street. Oh, I know how they're tryin' to trip you, an' so does every one in the show, an' they'll make it rough house for 'em, you can bet! You wouldn't believe how stuck the Folly Burlesque folks are on Patty Primrose."

"The dear things!" Patty murmured gratefully, and forthwith she cheered up as much as was possible for a high-strung little mother in danger of losing her heart's treasure and half crazed by the unending attacks on her personal character.



ONE night Miss Demonstrator swung jubilantly along on her way to the theater. Hitherto her sales had been to the chorus girls and to the men in minor parts. Tonight the two stars of the first and second magnitude had graciously consented to see her before the evening performance.

They were haughty creatures, and they used certain toilet specialties both high-priced and exclusive. Miss Demonstrator felt the battle won if she could try her powers of persuasion on them, for the little fly-away was strongly magnetic and not unaware of the elusive gift that was hers. In her expansive mood she made sure by a search in her purse that she had a "cart-wheel" for the doorkeeper.

But to her surprise when she pushed open the stage door the doorkeeper's bench was empty—an unheard-of circumstance. He came running back as she entered and sat down with a thud, taking no notice of her. From his manner Miss Demonstrator got the impression that he had had a call-down from the director. She went on up the dingy, ill lighted hall without speaking to him.

The dressing-room was empty. The girls' outdoor clothes lay scattered about the place.

From across the hall came a hubbub of voices. A man yelled frantically, "For Heaven's sake, keep 'em back!"

There followed a hushed murmur of many voices, then a girl's voice quavered up into a piercing shriek.

Miss Demonstrator cocked her ears.

"Somethin' doin', or I'm a purple pancake!"

She ran quickly to the door across the hall.

The leading man came staggering through, as white as flour, supporting a half dressed girl in the full tide of hysteria. And though the passageway was ringing with the sound, no one seemed to take the slightest notice of her.

The room beyond was full of people. They crowded around something at the end—something Miss Demonstrator could not see. Confusion grew—an unceasing crescendo, stabbed by an occasional soaring note of unbearable horror.

The Manager pushed his way out of the crowd. His silk hat was crushed under his arm like a three-cornered military affair. He was wringing his hands as one distraught. He passed her without noticing her question—her touch on his arm—and went down the passage.

"My Heaven!" he muttered. "Will the ambulance never come!"

A girl on the edge of the crowd swayed a moment, then sank down fainting on the floor at Miss Demonstrator's feet. The latter promptly dropped her bag and taking the insensible one by the shoulders dragged her out of the way to the side of the room.

A man passed her on his way to the door. She grabbed his coat and held on.

"For Heaven's sake! What's up?"

He turned on her a face as white as chalk. He tried to speak, but his larynx would not obey him.

"I—I'm the gink that found her," he whispered hoarsely, "and I'm all in!"

"Her?" she demanded, taking a fresh grip on his coat. "What her?"

He tugged at his coat, but she held fast.

"She cut her throat. I never seen nothin' like that before. I—I'm all in, I tell you!"

He struck at her hands. Then suddenly he broke at the knees and sank down whimpering like a child.

Suicide! Miss Demonstrator didn't want to come any nearer to it. She began to feel sick at the very thought. But she bent over the man on the floor and pulled him to his feet.

"Put your arm acrost my shoulder an' I'll git you out of this," she commanded.

He obeyed her without question, eager to leave. The girl who had fainted was coming to, moaning and shuddering as remembrance came back.

As she went up the passageway with the half swooning man, the Manager bumped

into her. He held his watch in his shaking hand, and he looked more anxious than Miss Demonstrator had ever seen a man look in all her life. He went into the room they had just quitted, blowing his whistle and crying out distractedly: "Overture! Overture!"

The sound of the fiddles out front drifted in faintly where they stood. But there was no response to the magic word. One girl, her wig awry, and her dress half buttoned and falling off her shoulders, came out of the room. As she passed the manager she sobbed, "Oh, I can't go on—we none of us can!"

The Stage Director ran out from behind the wings. He was pale and as worried-looking as the Manager, but in a towering rage.

"What's the matter with you!" he bawled, seizing the Manager by the arm. "Here's the best house we've had all season, the overture half through, and not a soul ready to go on!"

The Manager turned on him with an indignant remonstrance, but he broke in savagely.

"I don't give a cuss if the girl *has* knifed herself! Such things happen every day. You'll see a dozen of 'em in the papers tomorrow!" He flung his arms about in a transport of anger.

Again the Manager turned and ran into the room.

"Overture! First Act!" he yelled. "Get on as quick as you can make it!"

He might as well have commanded the waves of the sea. Some faltered toward him, held even in that moment by the force of daily habit. But a glance at their faces, drawn and white, made him shake his head despairingly and turn to the Director.

"You see?" he said, and shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll send out for something to steady them," the Director muttered.

He felt in his pocket as he spoke.

"Repeat the overture!" he commanded, and ran down the hall toward the outer door.



AS THE Director disappeared in the gloom the Manager turned and for the first time saw Miss Demonstrator standing near him. She had picked up her bag again, intent on escaping to the street. A dominating expression flashed

into his face. He strode forward and caught her wrist in his shaking hand.

"Some one's got to save the house," he said between his teeth. "It might as well be you!"

As he spoke he urged her along toward the wings.

"Me?" she gasped. "You must be dippy. I ain't done a turn for five years!"

"I don't care a cuss!" he made response desperately. "If you've ever been on, so much the better. But even if you hadn't——"

He paused. The music of the overture was loud in their ears.

Miss Demonstrator strove to snatch her wrist away.

"Me? Without a sketch ——" She whimpered aghast. "Not even a piece of po'try nor nothin'? You must be crazy! This thing's turned wheels in your top shelf!"

He never stopped urging her toward the stage. Already she could see the red plush drapery of the stage box. She resisted him with all her might.

He put his mouth close to her ear.

"Get off the same dope you use in selling your stuff!" he commanded. Then with a final effort he pushed Miss Demonstrator out on the stage, the footlights flaring up into her dazzled eyes, the closing bars of the music like thunder in her ears.

A moment she stood clutching her bag, dazed and unable to move.

Something came sliding, hurtling toward her from where the Manager stood in the wings. It was a chair—a common, ordinary kitchen chair.

"Property," he whispered hoarsely.

Instinctively she sprang out of the way. And with that swift movement her brain cleared, and comedy entered into her, as an imp into the possessed.

The music stopped.

She looked toward the place whence the chair issued, with an inquiring expression that grew, as she turned her face to the audience, to one of comic indignation. She waved a limp hand.

"That," she announced dramatically, "is how the 'perfesh' treats me when I go to sell 'em things."

She sat down on her heels beside the chair and began to take things out of her bag. Then propping a small folding mirror on the chair, she set herself to a make-up,

omitting no low comedy of motion that could amuse.

More than once a bubble of laughter rose. She kept her ear on what brought it, feeling instinctively for the temper and quality of the house. With a bold stroke or two she made as it were a comic map of her face and turned guilelessly to the audience. A ripple of laughter followed.

Any observant theatergoer knows that blasé, sensation-surfeited New York still retains, under its urban consciousness, the countryman's capacity for "gawping" at the two-headed calf. It was this that kept them, if not highly edified, at least in a good-humored expectancy, while Miss Demonstrator gathered herself together, got her mind into focus, hypnotized herself into the belief that this big mass of people staring at her with thousands of scintillant eyes, across the separating blaze of the footlights, were prospective customers—whom she must amuse before she could land them.

Almost before she knew, she was throwing out little tendrils of impudent jest, anecdote, reminiscence, with the natural comedy that dwelt in her daily words and motions.

Applause followed as echo follows sound.

She launched out on a beauty talk in direct imitation of a celebrated beauty specialist, throwing in certain well known mannerisms of gesture and facial expression that made every woman in the place laugh. Before that had time to get stale, she launched off to another phase.

"Didn't you never go t' the Obery House?" she asked. "To hear the belladonnas of the Uproar Company? My! There's some real downright peachy-peachies singin' there! They use my creams an' things, an' they've got the *grandest skins*—at the box office!" she finished slyly.

Moved by a sudden impulse she glanced to her right. There at the edge of the scenery stood Roddy. He caught her eye, and in spite of her warning gesture, ran to her, not stopping till he was in the center of the stage, with both arms tight round her neck and his face buried in her shoulder.

"Oh, Demmy," he wailed brokenly, "they've taken motha away in the dead wagon!"

Miss Demonstrator's heart gave a great leap and then stood still. Patty? Could it be Patty? Patty who had let the life out of her body in a scarlet stream? Patty,

stark and still in the room back there? Her head whirled. She turned to fly from the lights, the laughter, the thousands of staring eyes and smiling mouths. But some intangible bond held her, took her consciousness and forced it to focus on the scene before her, made her clasp the little lad closer and reassure him, even as she flung out over his shoulder with a return of her first manner and the first incident.

"Are they after you, too, sonny?" asked Miss Demonstrator.

All the time she was searching her mind for a place to close—anything that would look like the end of a turn.

Meanwhile the feminine portion of the audience behaved as they always behave when a child or an animal appears on the stage. Miss Demonstrator could hear the rising tone of tenderness, and a sort of affectionate mirth that might be expressed in the one phrase that came to her from some one in the front row—

"Ain't he cute!"



TWO men came into the stage box to the left.

Miss Demonstrator knew the old aquiline face in a flash—Mr. Van Alstyn, Sr. And with him was Patty's husband, sober for the first time for weeks. Another man followed them into the box—a man with a thin, mean face, who held himself deferentially to the old man. Was he, perhaps, the lawyer of whom Patty had spoken, who cross-questioned her so cruelly one day, telling her that she would have to give the child up to his grandfather in the end; that could and would prove what he was paid to prove—that Patty was morally unfit to bring Roddy up?

"A face like a sanctified mouse." This was the man. What was he doing here? Why were the three men in amicable conjunction? It could mean only one thing. The three had combined against Patty. They had come tonight to take Roddy away from her.

"If they ever do——" Patty had said, and the remembrance of her face as she said it pierced Miss Demonstrator's heart with a sharp pang. A vast indignation swelled up in her soul—a tide of something whose like she had never felt. It rose till it seemed to fill every atom of her. She was one hot, throbbing heart! Let them take Roddy if

they would, over Patty's dead body, but this big crowd should be the judge between them and her.

She drew Roddy's hands from about her neck and smiled into his eyes.

"Mother's all right," she reassured him softly. "And she wants Roddy to do just what Demmy tells him. Do you understand?"

He nodded; and, slipping out of her arms, stood looking up at her—a tiny figure in blue linen, with chubby bare legs and sandaled feet, and hair rumpled where he had butted his head into Miss Demonstrator's shoulder.

She turned to the audience with a frank laugh that brought its own echo.

"This here little gink," she announced, "is not on the bill. He just naturally butted in. And since you're all so good as to take a shine to him, why it won't hurt fur to lecture on the specimen while we've got 'im. His ma—" she gulped, then pulled herself together—"don't know he's here, or he'd come off so quick you couldn't see 'im fur dust."

She paused. The house was very still. Deep down under its urban veneer the country folk stared at the two-headed calf.

One of the men in the box made a sudden movement as if he would vault over the edge and stop her, but the other two prevented him.

"Now," she went on easily, "you all think that a boy whose ma is in burlesque is brought up a hull lot different from other kidlets. Some chumps—" with a vicious glance toward the box—"gits the idee he's bound straight for torment."

She drew the chair to the center of the stage, and, sitting down, beckoned the wondering child to her.

"Now then," she continued, "we'll let this here little geezer tell you himself just what happens to him every day under his Ma's eye—to say nothin' about Sundays when his Ma takes 'im to church. Of course it's the only place she *can* take him, 'cause the saloons is closed on the Sabbath!" she finished with a grimace.

"Here, sonny!" she said, turning the little lad round to face the great mass of people, silent now with the intense silence that falls when something vital is spread out before them. "Speak up nice an' loud, an' tell what you do all day. The first thing is——"

Roddy thought a moment. Then his voice came out so clear that the whole

audience laughed and grew very still again.

"My bath!"

"And then?"

"Breakfast!" he made answer promptly.

Miss Demonstrator winked slyly at the audience.

"An' motha gives you chocolate creams to eat, an' pie, an' anything that's handy. Don't she?"

Roddy looked up at her in surprise.

"Why—why—no, Demmy," he explained earnestly. "I have oatmeal—oatmeal—an' milk, an' that's all."

She threw back her head and laughed.

"Well, what happens next?"

Roddy swung one sandaled foot to and fro while he considered.

"Then motha" (and at the word tears came welling into Miss Demonstrator's eyes) "hears me my lessons."

"What does she hear you, Sonny?"

"My alfabet."

Miss Demonstrator drew back in pretended astonishment.

"What! A little boy of five know his letters? Say them, sonny."

Roddy took a long breath and began. Clearly and in a deep little voice he said them through to the end. A hum of approval followed, with a whisper of the tender laughter people know in the presence of children.

"Anything more, dear?"

He looked troubled.

"Rithmetic," he murmured with a wriggle of embarrassment. It was not his strong point.

"Then what?"

He dimpled. The edges of his small white teeth flashed out.

"Writin'," he announced gleefully.

It was his favorite study—"to make spiders on the paper."

Miss Demonstrator glanced about her regretfully.

"We'll have to guess how well you c'n scribble, sonny. Then what?"

Roddy laid both fat little hands on her knee.

"Then I come here with motha," he went on eagerly. "But motha—when motha——" He stammered a little, and his voice rose in pitch as if he were telling his friend something she didn't know. "Motha puts me in her little room when the—the—music begins to play, an'—an'—she gives me a picsure book an'—an'—locks me right

into her room so I—I—can't get out till motha comes again!"

His earnest voice and manner caused a ripple of laughter. Then everybody was quite still again.

"But motha didn't lock me in tonight," he pursued aggrievedly. "Motha sent me in to Daisy, an' said I must be a good boy an'—an' never forget her——"

Miss Demonstrator caught the little blue figure and bent over it a long moment.

He wriggled out of her arms.

"Demmy," he asked seriously, "why did she tell me that? I couldn't forget motha, could I?"

She choked.

"No, sonny," she answered fervently. "We none of us will ever forget her—never, never!"

She saw the Manager standing quite close to the edge of the scenery.

"All right!" he said softly, and she thought she had never seen a man look so moved—so sorry and glad at once.

She nodded and turned Roddy toward the sea of intent faces again.

"Sonny," she began—and the people in the front row saw two tears mount in her eyes and roll down her cheeks as with some remembrance too tender to be borne—"what is the last thing you do before you climb into bed an' kiss motha good night?"

Roddy gazed seriously at her. Then slowly he sank to his knees and folded his hands on her lap."

"Now I lay me," he began. And in the silence some one gave a quick low sob, instantly checked.

He said the whole prayer through without prompting, and went drowsily on to the next one that he had prayed ever since he could remember.

"God bless fatha an' motha, an' keep them both good, an' bless gran'pa an' make him love motha some time. Amen!"



MISS DEMONSTRATOR sat a moment choked with emotions and memories. Then gently she touched the little lad at her knee. He leaned heavily against her. She saw that the hour and the force of associated ideas had been too much for him. He was fast asleep.

She gathered him up in her arms and with his sleepy head on her shoulder walked slowly off the stage. Applause followed her—the hearty, steady applause that every

actor knows and thrills to when people's hearts have been touched, and some chord of memory sounded that brings all together in perfect harmony.

Miss Demonstrator's loyal heart was content. She had no need to ask—the crowd had judged, and the judgment was overwhelmingly in Patty's favor.

She gave the sleeping boy into the first arms that stretched out to receive him. It all rolled in upon her Patty was dead—was dead!

She groped her way past the company, gathered there waiting for the rise of the curtain, shaky, but themselves again. She hardly felt the friendly looks they bent upon her. Nothing mattered any more.

The music that had covered her exit subsided to silence. She could hear the curtain creaking up, and the stir the audience always made as they craned their necks to see. The voice of the leading lady came to her clearly in the gay little lilt that began the show.

She sank down on a pile of scenery and cried and cried as if she would never cease.

It seemed a long time that she sat there with the sound of other people's activities about her. The stage carpenter nearly tumbled over her in the dim light. The call boy in passing brushed against the feather in her hat. It tickled his neck. He looked back with a grin.

The applause filtered through from time to time. Everything made its merely mechanical record on her consciousness. The reaction of grief was upon her. She felt as if nothing would ever stir her again.

The Manager came toward her.

Behind him walked three men. The first, his elderly aquiline face flushed as with some unwonted tenderness, carried Roddy, still fast asleep.

Miss Demonstrator sprang to her feet indignantly.

"Give him to me, you murderer! Patty wasn't good enough, wasn't she? If you ever get to heaven you'll be lucky if the angels'll let you lick the dust off her garment's hem!"

"Hush!" the Manager commanded sternly. "For Heaven's sake hush! I want to tell you——"

She surveyed him with contempt.

"Since when have you begun to take the part of those that hounded Patty to her death?" she asked.

"She isn't dead!" he said eagerly. "It was a deep gash—but she will live."

"A-ah!"

Miss Demonstrator sank down on the pile of scenery. Things whirled about her, but she pulled herself together pluckily. The three men stood at a little distance regarding her. She reached out and caught hold of the Manager's long coat.

"Tell me," she faltered. "Will they——" She looked up appealingly.

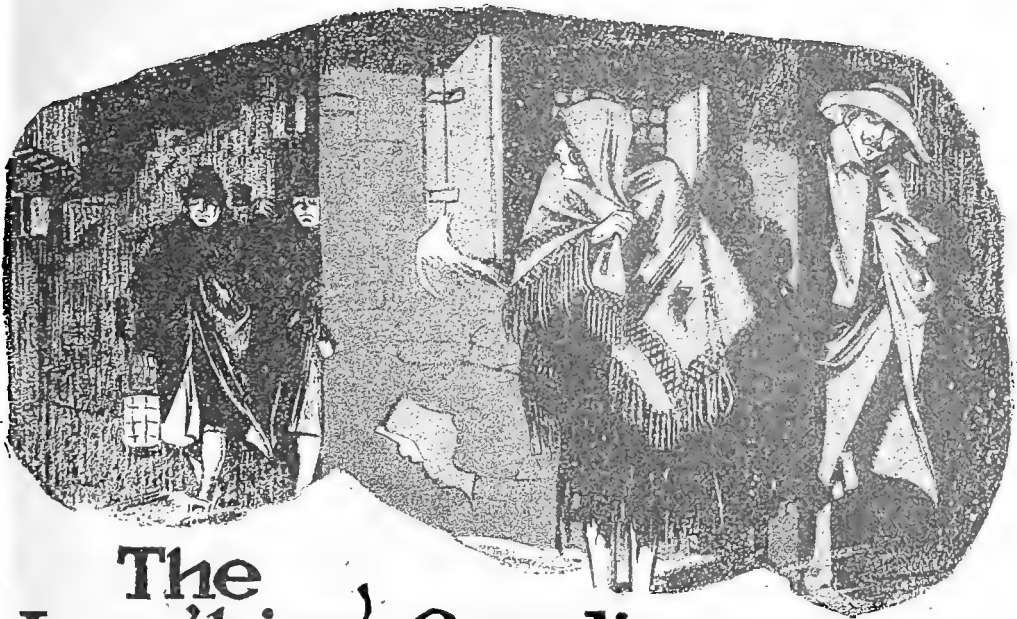
The Manager stooped and whispered in her ear.

"You've made good with them," he announced, with a gesture toward the men. "They know now they've been dead wrong. Don't rub it into 'em. They're feelin' bad enough."

He blinked rapidly and drew his hand across his eyes.

"Come," he said huskily. "Patty wants to see you."





The Laughing Cavalier

Baroness Orczy

SYNOPSIS—It is Haarlem, Holland, in 1624. *Gilda Beresteyn* learns that *Willem, Lord of Stoutenburg*, who had jilted her years before, is plotting to assassinate *Maurice, Prince of Orange*, Stadtholder of Holland, and seize the Government. Fearing that she will tell her father, a beneficiary and stanch supporter of Maurice, Stoutenburg induces her brother *Nicolaes* to have her kept out of the way for a few days, saying that he will marry her when he becomes Stadtholder.

As the kidnapper they have selected a merry, chivalrous soldier of fortune known as *Diogenes*, an ancestor of the *Scarlet Pimpernel*. *Diogenes* and *Gilda* have already met; she had stopped to acknowledge his gallantry in protecting a Spanish beggar girl from the mob, and had been piqued at his airy reception of her thanks.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LODGINGS WHICH WERE PAID FOR

AND once again Chance set to with a will and forged yet another link in that mighty chain which she had in hand.

For was it not in the natural course of things that the three philosophers, weary and thirsty as they were, should seek solace and material comfort under the pleasing roof of "The Lame Cow"—which, as I remarked before, was reputed to be one of the best conducted hostelries in Haarlem and to possess a cellar full of wines and ales which had not its equal even in Amsterdam?

And was it not equally natural, since the Lord of Stoutenburg lodged not far from that self-same hostelry—again, I repeat, once of the soberest in Haarlem—that his friends should choose to join him in the tap room there ere parting from one another on this eventful night?

Stoutenburg and his family were but little known in these parts, and the hue and cry after the escaped traitor had somewhat abated these few months past. Moreover, he was well disguised with beard and cloak and he kept a broad-brimmed hat pulled well down over his brow.

Stoutenburg had sat well screened from general observation within a dark recess of the monumental fireplace. *Nicolaes*

Beresteyn, the most intimate of all his friends, sat close to him, but neither of them spoke much. Beresteyn was exceptionally moody. Stoutenburg, on the other hand, affected a kind of grim humor, and made repeated allusions to scaffold or gallows as if he had already wholly resigned himself to an inevitable Fate.

The others sipped their mulled wine and tried to cheat themselves out of the burning anxiety which Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn's presence in the cathedral had awakened in their hearts. They had made great efforts not to seem preoccupied, and to be, outwardly at least, as gay as any of the other watch-night revelers in the room.

The peroration of the young adventurer had proved a welcome diversion; it had immediately aroused Stoutenburg's interest. He it was who first drew Beresteyn's attention to it, and he again who checked the angry words which more than once rose to his friend's lips at the insolent attitude affected by the knave.

And now, when the latter finally swaggered out of the room, it was Stoutenburg who made a sign to Beresteyn and then immediately arose to go. Beresteyn paid his account and went out, too, in the wake of his friend.

With the advent of the small morning hours the snow had once more begun to fall in large, sparse flakes that lay thick and glistening where they fell. At the end of the Kleine Hout Straat, where the two men presently found themselves, the feeble light of a street lamp glimmered through this white fluttering veil. With its help the group of foreign mercenaries could be dimly seen as they took leave of one another.

The tall form of Diogenes, crowned with its plumed hat, was easily distinguishable amongst them. He with his two special friends, fat Pythagoras and lean Socrates, remained standing for a few moments at the corner of the street after the others had departed. Then only did the three of them turn and walk off in the direction of the Oude Gracht.

For some reason as unexplainable as that which had guided their conduct at "The Lame Cow," Beresteyn and Stoutenburg, quite unconscious of the cold, elected to follow. Was it not Chance that willed it so? Chance, who was busy forging a chain and who had need of these two men's extraordinary interest in a nameless adven-

turer in order to make the links of that chain fit as neatly as she desired?



AT THE bottom of the Kleine Hout Straat, where it abuts on the Oude Gracht, the three philosophers had again paused, obviously this time in order to take leave of one another. The houses here were of a peculiarly woe-begone appearance, with tiny windows which could not possibly have allowed either air or light to penetrate within, and doors that were left ajar and were creaking on their hinges, showing occasional glimpses of dark, unventilated passages beyond and of drifts of snow heaped up against the base-board of the worm-eaten, broken-down floors.

The ground floor was in most instances occupied by squalid-looking shops, from which fetid odors emanated through the chinks and cracks of the walls. The upper rooms were let out as night lodgings to those who were too poor to afford better quarters.

Diogenes, with all his swagger and his airs of an out-at-elbows gentleman, evidently was one of these, for he was now seen standing on the threshold of one of these dilapidated houses and his two friends were finally bidding him good night. By tacit consent Beresteyn and Stoutenburg drew back farther into the shadow of the houses opposite.

There seemed to be no need for speech between them. For the nonce each knew that the other's thoughts were running in the same groove as his own; and momentarily these thoughts were centered into a desire to ascertain definitely if it was the tallest and youngest of those three knaves who lodged in that particular house.

It was only when the fat man and the lean one had finally turned away and left their comrade on the doorstep that the watchers appeared satisfied and, nodding silently to each other, made ready to go home. They had turned their steps once more toward the more healthful and elegant quarter of the city, and had gone but a few steps in that direction when something occurred behind them which arrested their attention and caused them to look back once more.

The something was a woman's cry, pitiful in the extreme—not an unusual sound in the streets of a prosperous city surely, and one which under ordinary circumstances would certainly not have aroused Stoutenburg's

or Beresteyn's interest. But the circumstances were not ordinary. The cry came from the very spot where the two men had last seen the young stranger standing in the doorway of his lodgings, and the appeal was obviously directed toward him.

"Kind sir," the woman was saying in a quavering voice, "half a guilder, I entreat you, for the love of Christ."

"Half a guilder, my good woman!" Diogenes said in response. "'Tis a fortune to such as me. I have not a kreutzer left in my wallet, 'pon my honor!"

Whereupon the two men who watched this scene from the opposite side of the street saw that the woman fell on her knees, and that beside her there stood an old man who made ready to follow her example.

"It's no use wearing out your stockings on this snow-covered ground, my good girl," said Diogenes good-humoredly. "All the kneeling in the world will not put half a guilder into my pocket nor into yours."

"And father and I must sleep under the canal bridge, and it is so bitterly cold!" the woman moaned more feebly.

"Very distinctly an uncomfortable place whereat to spend a night," rejoined the philosopher. "I have slept there myself before now, so I know."

Seemingly he made an attempt to turn incontinently on his heel, for the woman put out her hands and held on to his cloak.

"Father is crippled with rheumatism. Kind sir, he will die if he sleeps out there tonight," she cried.

"I am afraid he will," said Diogenes blandly.

In the meanwhile Pythagoras and Socrates, who evidently had not gone very far, returned in order to see what was going on on their friend's doorstep. It was Pythagoras who first recognized the wench.

"Thunder and lightning!" he exclaimed. "'Tis the Papist!"

"Which Papist?" queried Diogenes.

 "YES, gentle sirs," said the woman piteously. "You rescued me nobly this evening from that awful, howling mob. My father and I were able to go to midnight mass in peace. May God reward you all!"

"But," she added naively, "'twas no good preventing those horrid men from killing us, if we are to die from cold and hunger under the bridge of the canal."

All of which was not incomprehensible to the two men on the watch, who had heard a graphic account of the affray in Dam Straat as it was told by Pythagoras in the tap room of "The Lame Cow." And they both drew a little nearer so as not to lose a word of the scene which they were watching with ever growing interest. Neither of them attempted to interfere in it, however, though Beresteyn at any rate could have poured many a guilder in the hands of those two starving wretches without being any the poorer himself and though he was in truth not a hard-hearted man.

"The wench is right," now said Diogenes firmly. "The life which we helped to save we must not allow to be frittered away. I talked of stockings, girl," he added lightly, "but I see thy feet are bare. Brrr! I freeze when I look at thee."

"For a quarter guilder father and I could find a lodging——"

"But *dondersteen!*" he exclaimed. "Did I not tell thee that I have not one kreutzer in my wallet, and unless my friends can help thee——"

"Diogenes, thou speakest trash," interposed Pythagoras softly.

"We must both die of cold this night," moaned the woman in despair.

"Nay, ye shall not!" now said Diogenes with sudden decision. "There is a room in this very house which has been paid for three nights in advance. Go thither, wench. 'Tis at the very top of the stairs. Crawl thither as fast as thou canst, dragging thy ramshackle parent in thy wake."

"What ho, there!" he shouted at the top of his ringing voice. "What ho, my worthy landlord! What ho!"

And with his powerful fists he began pounding against the panels of the door, which swung loosely under the heavy blows.

Stoutenburg and Beresteyn drew yet a little nearer. They were more deeply interested than ever in all that was going on outside this squalid lodging-house.

The three philosophers were making a sufficiency of noise to waken half the street, and within a very few minutes they succeeded in their purpose. Through one or two of the narrow frames above heads appeared enveloped in shawls or cloaks, and anon the landlord of the house came shuffling down the passage, carrying a lighted, guttering taper.

The two silent watchers could not see

this man, but they could hear him grumbling and scolding audibly in short jerky sentences which he appeared to throw somewhat tentatively at his rowdy lodger.

"Late hour of the night," they heard him muttering. "New Year's morning. . . . Respectable house. . . . Noise to attract the town guard——"

"Hadst thou turned out of thy bed sooner, O well beloved lord of this abode of peace," said Diogenes cheerily, "there would have been less noise outside its portals. Had I not loved thee as I do, I would not have wakened thee from thy sleep, but would have acted in accordance with my rights and without bringing to thy ken a matter which would vastly have astonished thee in the morning."

The man continued to mutter, more impatiently this time:

"New Year's morning. . . . Respectable citizen. . . . Work to do in the morning. . . . Undesirable lodgers——"

"All lodgers are desirable who pay for their lodging, O wise landlord," continued Diogenes imperturbably. "I have paid thee for mine for three nights from this day, and I herewith desire thee to place my palatial residence at the disposal of this jongeuffrouw and of mynheer her father."

The man's mutterings became still more distinct.

"Baggage. . . . How do I know? Not bound to receive them——"

"Nay, but thou art a liar, Master Landlord," quoth Diogenes, still speaking quite pleasantly, "for the lodgings being mine, I have the right to receive in them anybody whom I choose. Therefore now do I give thee the option, either to show my guests straightway and with meticulous politeness into my room, or to taste the power and weight of my boot in the small of thy back and the hardness of my sword hilt across thy shoulders."

This time the man's mutterings became inaudible. Nicolaes Beresteyn and Stoutenburg could only guess what was passing in the narrow corridor of the house opposite. At one moment there was a heartrending howl which suggested that the landlord's obduracy had lasted a few moments too long for the impatient temper of a philosopher; but the howl was not repeated and soon Diogenes's clear voice rang out lustily again:

"There! I knew that gentle persuasion

would prevail. Dearly beloved landlord, now I pray thee guide the jongeuffrouw and mynheer her father to my sleeping-chamber. It is at thy disposal, wench, for three nights," he added airily. "Make the most of it; and if thou hast aught to complain of my friend the landlord, let me know. I am always to be found at certain hours of the day within the congenial four walls of The Lame Cow. Know'st thou the place? Well, good night, then; and pleasant dreams."

What went on after that the watchers could of course not see. The wench and the old man had disappeared inside the house, where, if they had a spark of gratitude in them, they would undoubtedly be kneeling even now at the feet of their whimsical benefactor.



THE next moment the interested spectators of this stirring little scene beheld the three philosophers once more standing together at the corner of the street under the feebly flickering lamp and the slowly falling snow. The door of the lodging-house had been slammed to behind them and the muffled heads had disappeared from out the framework of the windows above.

"And now perhaps you will tell us what you are going to do," said Pythagoras in flutelike tones.

"There is not a bed vacant in the dormitory where I sleep," said Socrates.

"Nor would I desire to sleep in one of those kennels fit only for dogs, which I can not imagine how you both can stomach," quoth Diogenes lightly. "The close proximity of Pythagoras and yourself and of all those who are most like you in the world would chase pleasing sleep from mine eyelids. I prefer the canal."

"You can not sleep out of doors in this——of a cold night," growled Socrates.

"And I can not go back to 'The Lame Cow,' for I have not a kreutzer left in my wallet wherewith to pay for a sip."

"Then what the devil are you going to do?" reiterated Pythagoras plaintively.

"I have a friend," said Diogenes, after a slight pause.

"Hm?" was the somewhat dubious comment on this fairly simple statement.

"He will give me breakfast early in the morning."

"Hm!"

"'Tis but a few hours to spend in lonely communion with nature."

"Hm!"

"The cathedral clock has struck three. At seven my good Hals will ply me with hot ale and half his hunk of bread and cheese."

"Hals?" queried Socrates.

"Frans Hals," replied Diogenes. "He paints pictures and contrives to live on the proceeds. If his wife does not happen to throw me out, he will console me for the discomforts of this night."

"Bah!" ejaculated Pythagoras in disgust. "A painter of pictures!"

"And a brave man when he is sober."

"With a scold for a wife! Ugh! What about your playing the gentleman now?"

"The play was short, O wise Pythagoras," retorted Diogenes with imperturbable good humor. "The curtain has already come down upon the last act. I am once more a knave, a merchant ready to flatter the customer who will buy his wares."

"Hech there, sir, my lord! What are your needs? My sword, my skin, they are yours to command! So many guilders, sir, and I will kill your enemy for you, fight your battles, abduct the wench that pleases you. So many guilders! And when they are safely in my pocket I can throw my glove in your face lest you think I have further need of your patronage."

"'Tis well to brag," muttered Pythagoras, "but you'll die with cold this night."

"But at dawn I'll eat a hearty breakfast offered me by my friend Frans Hals for the privilege of painting my portrait."

"Doth he really paint thy portrait, O handsome Diogenes?" said Pythagoras unctuously.

"Aye, thou ugly old toad. He has begun a new one, for which I have promised to sit. I'll pay for the breakfast he gives me, by donning a gorgeous gold-embroidered doublet which he once stole from somewhere, by putting my hand on my hip, tilting my hat at a becoming angle, and winking at him by the hour whilst he paints away."

"Hm! After a night of wandering by the canal in the fog and snow and sharing the meager breakfast of a half starved painter, methinks the portrait will be that of a Knight of the Rueful Countenance."

"Indeed not, old compeer," said Diogenes with a hearty laugh. "It shall be the portrait of a Laughing Cavalier."

CHAPTER IX

THE PAINTER OF PICTURES

AFTER this episode Chance had little to do with the further events of this true chronicle.

Men took their destiny in their own hands and laughed at Fate and at the links of the chain which she had been forging so carefully and so patiently ever since she began the business on the steps of the Stadthuis a few short hours ago.

Beresteyn and Stoutenburg, walking home together in the small hours of New Year's morning, spoke very little together at first. They strode along side by side, each buried in his own thoughts, and only a few curt remarks passed at intervals between them. But something lay on the minds of both; something of which each desired to speak to the other, yet neither of them seemed willing to be the first to broach the absorbing topic.

It was Stoutenburg who at last broke the silence.

"A curious personality, that knave," he said carelessly after a while. "An unscrupulous devil, as daring as he is reckless of consequences, I should say. . . . Yet trustworthy withal. . . . What think you?"

"A curious personality, as you say," replied Beresteyn vaguely.

"He might have been useful to us had we cared to pay for his services. . . . But now 'tis too late to think of further accomplices. . . . New men won or bought for our cause only mean more victims for the gallows."

"You take a gloomy view of the situation," said Beresteyn somberly.

"No, only a fatalistic one. With our secret in a woman's keeping—and that woman free and even anxious to impart it to one of my most bitter enemies—I can see naught that can ward off the inevitable."

"Except——"

"Yes, of course," rejoined Stoutenburg earnestly. "If you, Nicolaes, are ready to make the sacrifice which alone could save us all."

"It is a sacrifice which will involve my honor, my sister's love for me, my father's trust——"

"If you act wisely and circumspectly, my good friend," retorted Stoutenburg dryly, "neither your father nor Gilda herself need ever know that you had a share in—in what you propose to do."

Beresteyn made no reply, and he and his goad friend walked on in silence until they reached the small house close to "The Lame Cow," where Stoutenburg had his lodgings. Here they shook hands before parting. Stoutenburg held his friend's hand in his, tightly grasped, for a moment or two while he said earnestly:

"It is only for a few days, Nicolaes—a few days, during which, though absent and engaged in the greatest task that any man can undertake on this earth, I swear to you that I will keep watch over Gilda and defend her honor with my life. If you will make the sacrifice for me and for our cause, Heaven and your country will reward you beyond your dreams.

"With the death of the Stadtholder my power in the Netherlands will be supreme, and herewith, with my hand in yours, I solemnly plight my troth to Gilda. She was the first woman I ever loved, and I have never ceased to love her. Now she fills my heart and soul, even at times to the exclusion of my most ambitious hopes. Nicolaes, my friend, it is in your power to save my life as well as your own. If you will do it, there will be no bounds to my gratitude."

And Beresteyn replied calmly:

"The sacrifice which you ask of me I will make. I will take the risk for the sake of my country and of my faith. Tomorrow at noon I will come to your lodgings and tell you in detail all the arrangements which I shall have made by then. I have no fear for Gilda. I believe that Heaven has guided my thoughts and footsteps tonight for the furtherance of our cause." After which the two men took final leave of each other.



NOW it was close on ten o'clock of New Year's morning. Nicolaes Beresteyn had spent several hours in tossing restlessly under the warm eider down and between the fine linen sheets embroidered by his sister's deft hands. During these hours of sleeplessness a plan had matured in his mind which, though it had finally issued from his own consciousness, had really found its origin in the reckless brain of Willem van Stoutenburg.

Beresteyn now saw himself as the savior of his friends and of their patriotic cause. He felt that in order to carry out the plan which he firmly believed that he himself had conceived, he was making a noble

sacrifice for his country and for his faith, and he was proud to think that it lay in his power to offer the sacrifice.

That this same sacrifice would have his own sister for victim, he cared seemingly very little. He was one of those men in whose heart political aims outweigh every tender emotion, and he firmly believed that Gilda would be richly rewarded by the fulfilment of that solemn promise made by Stoutenburg.

Exquisite visions of satisfied ambition, of triumph and of glory chased away sleep. He saw his friend as supreme ruler of the State, with powers greater than the Princes of Orange had ever wielded. He saw Gilda, his sister, grateful to him for the part which he had played in reuniting her to the man whom she had always loved, she too supreme in power as the proud wife of the new Stadtholder. And he saw himself as the Lord High Advocate of the Netherlands, standing in the very shoes of that same John of Barneveld whose death he would have helped to avenge.

These and other thoughts had stirred Nicolaes Beresteyn's fancy while he lay awake during these the first hours of the New Year, and it was during those self-same hours that a nameless stranger whom his compeers called Diogenes had tramped up and down the snow-covered streets of Haarlem trying to keep himself warm.

I am very sorry to have to put it on record that during that time he swore more than once at his own soft-heartedness, which had caused him to give up his hard but sheltered pallet to a pair of Papists who were nothing to him and whom probably he would never see again.

"I begin to agree with that bloated puff-ball Pythagoras," he mused dejectedly once, when an icy wind blowing straight from the North Sea drove the falling snow into his boots and under his collar and up his sleeves and nearly froze the marrow in his bones. "It is but sorry pleasure to play at being a gentleman. And I had not many hours of it either," he added ruefully.

Even the most leaden-footed hours do come to an end, however. At half after six Diogenes turned his steps toward the Peuselaarsteeg, where dwelt his friend Frans Hals, the painter of pictures. Fortunately Mevrouw Hals was in a fairly good temper. The last portrait group of the officers of St.

Joris' Shooting-Guild had just been paid for, and there was practically a new commission to paint another group of these gentlemen.

And Mynheer van Zeller, the deputy bailiff, had bought the fancy picture too, for which that knave Diogenes had sat last year, so Mevrouw Hals was willing to provide the young man with a savory and hot breakfast if he were willing again to allow Frans to make a picture of his pleasant face.

Mevrouw Hals being in rare good humor, the breakfast was both substantial and savory. Diogenes, who was starved with hunger as well as with cold, did great honor to all that was laid before him. He ate heartily while recounting his adventures of the past night to his friend.

"All that trouble for a Papist wench!" said the painter, as contemptuously as Pythagoras himself would have done. "And maybe a Spaniard too."

"Good-looking girl," quoth Diogenes dryly, "and would make you a good model, Frans. For a few kreutzers she'd be glad enough to do it."

"I'll have none of these vixens inside my house," interposed Mevrouw Hals decisively, "and don't you teach Frans any of your loose ways, my man."

Diogenes made no reply. He only winked at his friend. No doubt he thought that Hals no longer needed teaching.

The two men repaired to the studio, a huge, bare room littered with canvases, but void of furniture save for an earthenware stove in which fortunately a cheerful fire was blazing, a big easel toughly fashioned of deal, a platform for the model to stand on and two or three rush-bottomed chairs. There was also a ramshackle dowry chest, black with age, which mayhap had once held the piles of home-made linen brought as a dowry by the first Mevrouw Hals. Now it seemed to contain a heterogeneous collection of gaudy rags, together with a few fine articles of attire, richly embroidered relics of more prosperous days.

The artist went straight up to the chest and from out the litter he selected a bundle of clothes which he handed over to his friend.

"Slip into them as quickly as you can, old compeer," he said. "My fingers are itching to get to work."

And whilst he fixed the commenced picture on the easel and set out his palette, Diogenes threw off his shabby clothes and

donned the gorgeous doublet and sash which the painter had given him.

CHAPTER X

THE LAUGHING CAVALIER

WE ALL know every fold of that doublet now, with its magnificent sleeves, crimson-lined and richly embroidered; its slashings which afford peeps of snowy linen and its accessories of exquisite lace. The immortal picture then painted by Frans Hals and which he called "The Laughing Cavalier" has put its every line on record for all times.

Diogenes wore it with delight. Its splendor suited his swaggering air to perfection. Its fine black cloth, delicate lace and rich silk sash set off to perfection his well proportioned, massive figure.

A joy to the artist, every bit of him—the tone, the pose, the line, the color and that face, full of life, of the joy of living, that merry twinkle in the eyes, that laugh that forever hovers on the lips!

We'll stand before it, marveling at the artist's skill, for we know that the portrait is true to the life; we know that it is true, because we know the man. His whole character is there indelibly writ upon the canvas by the master hand of a genius. Diogenes the soldier of fortune is there, the man who bows to no will save to his own, too independent to bow to kindred or to power, the man who takes life as he finds it, but leavens it with his own gaiety and the priceless richness of his own humor. We know him for his light-hearted gaiety. We condone his swagger, we forgive his reckless disregard of all that makes for sobriety and respectability.

The eyes twinkle at us, the mouth all but speaks, and we know and recognize every detail as true. Only the fine, straight brow, the noble forehead, the delicate contour of the nose and jaw puzzle us at times, for these we can not reconcile with the man's calling or with his namelessness, until we remember his boast in the tavern of "The Lame Cow" on New Year's morning, "My father was one of those who came in English Leicester's train."

So we see him now, standing quite still, while the artist is absorbed in his work; his tall figure very erect, the head slightly thrown back, the well shaped hand resting

on the hip and veiled in folds of filmy lace. And so did Mynheer Nicolaes Beresteyn see him as he entered the artist's studio at ten o'clock of that same New Year's morning.

"A happy New Year to you, my good Hals," he said with easy condescension. "*Vervloekte* weather, eh, for the incoming year! There must be half a foot of snow in the by-street by now."

With that same air of graciousness he acknowledged the artist's obsequious bow. His father, Mynheer Councilor Beresteyn, was an avowed patron of Frans Hals, and the hour had not yet struck in civilized Europe when wealth would go hat in hand bowing to genius and soliciting its recognition. In this year of grace 1624 genius had still to hold the hat and to acknowledge if not to solicit the kindly favors of wealth.

Nicolaes Beresteyn did not know exactly how to greet the man with whom he had a few hours ago bandied arguments in the tap room of a tavern, and whom, to tell the truth, he had expressly come to find. The complaisant nod which he had bestowed on Frans Hals did not somehow seem appropriate for that swaggering young knight of industry, who looked down on him from the high eminence of the model's platform so that Nicolaes was obliged to look well up, if he wished to meet his glance at all.

It was the obscure soldier of fortune who relieved the pompous burgher of his embarrassment,

"Fate hath evidently not meant that we should remain strangers, sir," he said lightly. "This meeting after last night's pleasing amenities is indeed unexpected."

"And most welcome, sir, as far as I am concerned," rejoined Nicolaes pleasantly. "My name is Nicolaes Beresteyn, and right glad am I to renew our acquaintance of last night. I had no idea that my friend Hals could command so perfect a model. No wonder that his pictures have become the talk of the town."

He turned back to Hals now with a presumption of his patronizing manner.

"I came to confirm my father's suggestion, my good Hals, that you should paint his portrait and at the price you named yourself. The officers of St. Joris's Guild are also desirous, as I understand, of possessing yet another group from your brush."

"I shall be honored," said the artist.

"Tis many an ugly face you'll have to

paint within the next few months, my friend," added Diogenes lightly.

"My father is reckoned one of the handsomest men in Holland," retorted Beresteyn, with becoming dignity.

"And the owner of the finest tulip bulbs in the land," said the other imperturbably. "I heard him tell last night that he had just given more florins for one bit of dried onion than I have ever fingered in the whole course of my life."

"Fortune, sir, has not dealt with you hitherto in accordance with your deserts."

"No; 'tis my sternest reproach against her."

"There is always a tide, sir, in a man's fortunes."

"Mine, I feel, sir, is rising at your call."

There was a moment's pause now, while the two men looked on each other eye to eye, appraising each other, each counting on his opponent's worth. Then Nicolaes suddenly turned back to Frans Hals.

"My good Hals," he said, "might I crave a favor from your friendship?"

"I am at your service, mynheer, now as always, as you know," murmured the artist, who indeed was marveling what favor so illustrious a gentleman could ask of a penniless painter of portraits.

"'Tis but a small matter to you," rejoined Nicolaes, "but it would be of great service to me. I desire to hold private conversation with this gentleman. Could I do so in your house without attracting anybody's attention?"

"Easily, sir. This room, though none too comfortable, is at your disposal. I have plenty of work to do in another part of my house. No one will come in here. You will be quite undisturbed."

"I am infinitely obliged to you. 'Tis but half an hour's privacy I desire—providing this gentleman will grant me the interview."

"Like my friend Hals," rejoined Diogenes suavely, "I am, sir, at your service. The tides are rising around me. I feel them swelling even as I speak. I have an overwhelming desire to ride on the crest of the waves, rather than to duck under them against my will."

"I hope this intrusion will not retard your work too much, my good Hals," said Beresteyn, with somewhat perfunctory solicitude.

"Oh," interposed Diogenes airily, "the joy of being of service to so bountiful a patron

will more than compensate Frans Hals for this interruption to his work. Am I not right, old friend?" he added with just a trace of seriousness in his mocking tones.

 AS SOON as the heavy oaken door had fallen to behind the master of the house, Beresteyn turned with marked eagerness to Diogenes.

"Now, sir," he said, "will you accord me your close attention for a moment? On my honor it will be to your advantage so to do."

"And to your own, I take it, sir," rejoined Diogenes, as he stepped down from the elevated platform and sat himself astride one of the rickety chairs facing his interlocutor, who had remained standing. "To your own, too, sir, else you had not spent half an hour in that *vervloekte* weather last night pacing an insalubrious street in order to find out where I lodged."

Nicolaes bit his lip with vexation.

"You saw me?" he asked.

"I have eyes at the back of my head," replied the young man. "I knew that you followed me in company with a friend all the way from the door of 'The Lane Cow,' and that you were not far off when I announced my intention of sleeping under the stars and asking my friend Frans Hals for some breakfast later on."

Beresteyn had quickly recovered his equanimity.

"I have no cause to deny it," he said.

"None," assented Diogenes.

"Something, sir, in your manner and your speech last night aroused my interest. Surely you would not take offense at that!"

"Certainly not."

"And hearing you speak, a certain instinct prompted me to try and not lose sight of you if I could by some means ascertain where you lodged. My friend and I did follow you; I own it, and we witnessed a little scene which did you infinite credit."

Diogenes merely bowed his head this time in acknowledgment.

"It showed, sir," resumed Nicolaes after a slight pause, "that you are chivalrous to a fault, brave and kindly; and these are just the three qualities which I—even like your illustrious namesake—have oft sought for in vain."

"Shall we add also, for the sake of truth, sir," said Diogenes pleasantly, "that I am obviously penniless, presumably unscrupu-

lous and certainly daring, and that these are just the three qualities which you—and your friend—most require just now in the man whom you wish to pay for certain services?"

"You read my thoughts, sir."

"Have I not said that I have eyes at the back of my head?" And Nicolaes Beresteyn wondered if that second pair of eyes were as merry and mocking and withal as inscrutable as those that met his now.

"Well," he said, as if with suddenly conceived determination, "again I see no cause why I should deny it. Yes, sir, you have made a shrewd guess; I have need of your services, of your chivalry and of your valor and—well, yes," he added after an instant's hesitation, "of your daring and your paucity of scruples, too. As for your penury, why, sir, its pangs need worry you no longer."

"It all sounds very tempting, sir," said Diogenes with his most winning smile. "Suppose now that we put preliminaries aside and proceed more directly."

"As you will."

Nicolaes Beresteyn now took the other chair and brought it close to his interlocutor. Then he sat down and sinking his voice to a whisper he began:

"I will be as brief and to the point as I can, sir. There are secrets, as you know, the knowledge of which is oftentimes dangerous. Such a one was spoken of in the cathedral last night, after watch-night service, by six men who hold their lives in their hands and are ready to sacrifice them for the good of their country and of their faith."

"In other words," interposed Diogenes with dry humor, "six men in the cathedral last night decided to murder some one for the good of the country and of their faith and for the satisfaction of the devil."

"'Tis false!" cried Beresteyn

"Be not angered, sir. I was merely guessing—and guessing, methinks, not very wide of the mark. I pray you, proceed. You vastly interest me. We left, then, six men in the cathedral after watch-night service plotting for the welfare of Holland and the established faith."

"Their lives, sir," resumed Beresteyn more calmly, "depend on the inviolability of their secret. You are good at guessing; will you guess what would happen to those six men if their conversation last night had been overheard and their secret betrayed?"



"THE scaffold," said Diogenes laconically.

"Torture and death, sir," said Beresteyn vehemently. "There are six men in this city to-day whose lives are at the mercy of one woman."

"Oho! 'Twas a woman then who surprised those six men in their endeavor to do good to Holland and to uphold the faith."

"Rightly spoken, sir! To do good to Holland and to uphold the faith! Those are the two motives which guide six ardent patriots in their present actions and cause them to risk their lives, and more, that they may bring about the sublime end. A woman has surprised their secret, a woman pure and good as the stars; but a woman for all that, weak in matters of sentiment and like to be swayed by a mistaken sense of what she would call her duty. A woman now, sir, holds the future happiness of Holland, the triumph of faith and the lives of six patriots in the hollow of her hand."

"And 'tis with the lives of six patriots that we are most concerned at the moment, are we not?" asked Diogenes blandly.

"Put it as you will, sir. I can not expect you, a stranger, to take the welfare of Holland and of her faith so earnestly as we Dutchmen do. Our present concern is with the woman."

"Is she young?"

"Yes."

"Pretty?"

"What matter?"

"I don't know. The fact might influence mine actions. For of course you wish to put the woman out of the way."

"Only for a time; and from my soul I wish her no harm. I only want to place her out of the reach of doing us all a grievous wrong. Already she has half threatened to speak of it all to my father. The idea of it is unthinkable."

"I want her out of the way for a few days, not more than ten days at most. I want her taken out of Haarlem, to a place of safety which I will point out to you anon, and under the care of faithful dependents who would see that not a hair on her head be injured."

"You see, sir, that what I would ask of you would call forth your chivalry and need not shame it; it would call forth your daring and your recklessness of consequences, and if you will undertake to do me service in this, my gratitude and that of my

friends as well as the sum of two thousand guilders will be yours to command."

"About a tenth part of the money, in fact, which your father, sir, doth oft give for a bulb."

"Call it three thousand, sir," said Nicolaes. "We would still be your debtors."

"You are liberal, sir."

"It means my life and those of my friends, and most of us are rich."

"But the lady—I must know more about her. Ah, sir! This is a hard matter for me. A lady, young, presumably fair— Of a truth I care naught for women, but, please God, I have never hurt a woman yet."

"Who spoke of hurting her, man?" queried Nicolaes haughtily.

"This abduction, the State secret, the matter of life and death, the faithful dependents— How do I know, sir, that all this is true?"

"On the word of honor of a gentleman!" retorted Beresteyn hotly.

"A gentleman's honor is easily attenuated where a woman is concerned."

"The lady is my own sister, sir."

Diogenes gave a long, low whistle.

"Your sister!" he exclaimed.

"My only sister, and one who is dearly loved. You see, sir, that her safety and her honor are dearer to me than mine own."

"Yet you propose entrusting both to me!" said Diogenes with a mocking laugh. "To me, a nameless adventurer, a penniless wastrel whose trade lies in his sword and his wits."

"Which must prove to you, sir, first how true are my instincts, and secondly how hardly I am pressed. My instinct last night told me that in this transaction I could trust you. Today I have realized more fully than I did last night that my sister is a deadly danger to many, to our country and to our faith. She surprised a secret, the knowledge of which, had she been a man, would have meant death then and there in the chapel of the cathedral. Being a woman— she can not pay for her knowledge with her life; but her honor and her freedom are forfeit to me because I am a man and she a woman. I am strong and she is weak; she has threatened to betray me and my friends and I must protect them and our cause."

"I have decided to place her where she can not harm us, but some one must convey her thither, since I must not appear before her in this matter. Therefore hath my

choice fallen on you, sir, for that mission, chiefly because of that instinct which last night told me that I could trust you. If my instinct should prove me wrong, I would kill you for having cheated me, but I would even then not regret what I had done."

 HE PAUSED and for a moment looked straight into the laughter-loving face of the man in whose keeping he was ready to entrust with absolute callousness the safety and honor of one whom he should have protected with his life. The whole face even now seemed still to laugh. The eyes twinkled; the mouth was curled in a smile.

The next moment the young adventurer had risen to his full height. He picked up his hat, which lay on the platform close beside him, and with it in his hand he made an elaborate and deep bow to Nicolaes Beresteyn.

"Sir?" queried the latter in astonishment.

"At your service, sir," said Diogenes gaily. "I am saluting a greater blackguard than I can ever hope to be myself."

"Insolent!" exclaimed Nicolaes hotly.

"Easy, easy, my good sir," interposed the other calmly. "It would not suit your purpose or mine that we should cut each other's throat. Let me tell you at once, and for the appeasing of your anxiety and that of your friends, that I will for the sum of four thousand guilders take Jongejufrouw Beresteyn from this city to any place you may choose to name. This should also ease your pride, for it will prove to you that I also am a blackguard and that you therefore need not stand shamed before me.

"I have named a higher sum than the one which you have offered me, not with any desire to squeeze you, sir, but because obviously I can not do this work single-handed. The high roads are not safe. I could not all alone protect the lady against the army of footpads that infest them. I shall have to engage and pay an escort for her all the way. But she shall reach the place to which you desire me to take her; to this I pledge you my word. Beyond that— Well, you have said it yourself; by her knowledge of your secret she has forfeited her own safety. You, her own brother, entrust her to me. The rest lies between you and your honor."

An angry retort once more arose to Nicolaes Beresteyn's lips, but common sense forced him to check it. The man was right

in what he said. On the face of it his action in entrusting his own sister into the keeping of a knight of industry, a nameless wastrel whose very calling proclaimed him an unscrupulous adventurer, was the action of a coward and of a rogue.

Any man with a spark of honor in him would condemn Nicolaes Beresteyn as a blackguard for this deed. Nevertheless, there was undoubtedly something in the whole personality of this same adventurer that in a sense exonerated Nicolaes from the utter dishonor of his act.

On the surface the action was hideous, monstrous and cowardly; but beneath that surface there was the undercurrent of trust in this one man, the firm belief born of nothing more substantial than an intuition that this man would in this matter play the part of a gentleman.

But it is not my business to excuse Nicolaes Beresteyn in this. What guided him solely in his present action was that primary instinct of self-preservation, that sense which animals have without the slightest knowledge or experience on their part and which has made men play at times the part of a hero and at others that of a knave.

Stoutenburg, who was always daring and always unscrupulous where his own ambitious schemes were at stake, had by a careful hint shown him a way of effectually silencing Gilda during the next few days. Beresteyn's mind, filled to overflowing with a glowing desire for success and for life, had readily worked upon the hint.

And he did honestly believe—as hundreds of misguided patriots have believed before and since—that Heaven was on his side of the political business.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BARGAIN

THERE had been silence in the great, bare work room for some time, silence broken only by Beresteyn's restless pacing up and down the wooden floor. Diogenes had resumed his seat, his shrewd glance following every movement of the other man, every varied expression of his face. At last Nicolaes came to a halt opposite the other man.

"Am I to understand then, sir," he asked, looking Diogenes straight between the eyes and affecting not to note the mocking

twinkle within them, "that you accept my proposition?"

"Absolutely, sir," replied the other.

"Then shall we proceed with the details?"

"If it please you."

"You will agree to do me service for the sum of four thousand guilders?"

"In gold."

"Of course. For this sum you will convey Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn out of Haarlem, conduct her with a suitable escort and in perfect safety to Rotterdam and there deliver her into the hands of Mynheer Ben Isajè, the banker, who does a vast amount of business for me and is entirely and most discreetly devoted to my interests. His place of business is situated on the Schiedamsche Dyk and is a house well known to every one in Rotterdam, seeing that he is the richest money lender in the city."

"That is all fairly simple, sir," assented Diogenes.

"You will, of course, tender me your oath of secrecy."

"My word of honor, sir. If I break that I would be as likely to break an oath."

"Very well," said Beresteyn, after a moment's hesitation, during which he tried vainly to scrutinize a face which he had already learned was quite inscrutable. "Shall we arrange the mode of payment then?"

"If you please."

"How to obtain possession of the person of the jongejuffrouw is not my business to tell you. Let me but inform you that to-day being New Year's Day she will surely go to evensong at the cathedral and that her way from our house thither will lead her along the bank of the Oude Gracht between the Zijl Straat, where our house is situate, and the Hout Straat, which debouches on the Grootemarkt. You know the bank of the Oude Gracht better than I do, sir, so I need not tell you that it is lonely, especially at the hour when evensong at the cathedral is over.

"The jongejuffrouw is always escorted in her walks by an elderly duenna whom you will of course also take to Rotterdam, so that she may attend on my sister on the way, and by two serving-men whose combined courage is not of course equal to your own. This point, therefore, I must leave you to arrange."

"I thank you, sir."

"In the same way it rests with you what arrangements you make for the journey it-

self. The providing of a suitable carriage and of an adequate escort I leave entirely in your hands."

"Again I thank you."

"I am concerned only with the matter itself and with the payment which I make to you for your services. As for your route, you will leave Haarlem by the Holy Cross Gate and proceed straight to Bennebrock, a matter of a league or so. There I will meet you at the half-way house which stands at the cross-roads where a sign post points the way to Leyden.

"The innkeeper there is a friend of mine, whose natural discretion has been well nurtured by frequent gifts from me. He hath name Praff and will see to the comfort of my sister and of her duenna, while you and I settle the first instalment of our business, quite unbeknown to her.

"There, sir, having assured myself that my sister is safe and in your hands I will give over to you the sum of one thousand guilders, together with a letter writ by me to the banker Ben Isajè of Rotterdam. He knows Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn well by sight. In my letter I will ask him first to ascertain from herself if she is well and safe; secondly, to see that she is at once conveyed, still under your escort, to his private residence which is situate some little distance out of the city between Schiedam and Overschie on the way to Delft; and lastly to hand over to you the balance of three thousand guilders still due you."



HE PAUSED a moment to draw breath after the lengthy peroration. Then, as Diogenes made no comment, he said somewhat impatiently—

"I hope, sir, that all these arrangements meet with your approval!"

"They fill me with profound respect for you, sir, and admiration for your administrative capacities," replied Diogenes with studied politeness.

"Indeed I do flatter myself——" quoth the other.

"Not without reason, sir. The marvelous way in which you have provided for the safety of three-fourths of your money and hardly at all for that of your sister, fills me with envy."

"Insolent——"

"No, no, my good sir," interposed Diogenes blandly. "We have already agreed that we are not going to quarrel, you and

I; we have too great a need for each other for that. Three thousand guilders—which after deductions will be my profit in this matter—means a fortune to a penniless adventurer, and you are shrewd enough to have gaged that fact, else you had not come to me with such a proposal. I will do you service, sir, for the three thousand guilders which will enable me to live a life of independence in the future, and also for another reason which I would not care to put into words, and which you, sir, would fail to understand.

"So let us say no more about all these matters. I agree to your proposals and you accept my services. Tonight at ten o'clock I will meet you at the half-way house which stands in the hamlet of Bennebrock at the cross-roads where a sign post points the way to Leyden."

"Tonight! That's brave!" exclaimed Beresteyn. "You read my thoughts, sir, even before I could tell you that delay in this affair would render it useless."

"Tonight then, sir," said Diogenes in conclusion. "I pray you, have no fear of failure. The jongeuffrouw will sleep at Leyden or somewhere near there this night. The city is distant but half a dozen leagues and we can reach it easily by midnight. Thence in the morning we can continue our journey, and should be in sight of Rotterdam twenty-four hours later."

"For the rest, as you say, the manner of our journey doth not concern you. If the frost continues and we can travel by sledge all the way, we could reach Rotterdam in two days; in any event, even if a thaw were to set in, we should not be more than three days on the way."

He arose from his chair and stood now facing Beresteyn. His tall figure, stretched to its full height, seemed to tower above the other man, though the latter was certainly not short; but Diogenes looked massive—a young lion sniffing the scent of the desert. The mocking glance, the curve of gentle irony, were still there in eyes and mouth, but the nostrils quivered with excitement, with the spirit of adventure which never slept so soundly but that it awakened at a word.

"And now, sir," he said, "there are two matters, both of equal importance, which we must settle ere I can get to work."

"What may these be, sir?"

"First the question of money. I have

not the wherewithal to make preparations. I shall have to engage a sleigh for tonight, horses, an escort as far as Leyden. I shall have to make payments for promises of secrecy——"

"That is just, sir. Would two hundred guilders meet this difficulty?"

"Five hundred would be safer," said Diogenes airily, "and you may deduct that sum from your first payment at Bennebrock."

Beresteyn did not choose to notice the impertinent tone which rang through the other man's speech. Without wasting further words, he took a purse from his wallet, and sitting down on one corner of the model's platform, he emptied the contents of the purse upon it.

He counted out five hundred guilders, partly in silver and partly in gold. These he replaced in the purse, which he then handed over to Diogenes. The latter had not moved from his position during this time, standing as he did at some little distance, so that Beresteyn had to get up in order to hand him the money. Diogenes acknowledged its receipt with a courteous bow.

"And what is the other matter, sir?" asked Nicolaes, after he had placed the rest of his money back into his wallet. "What is the other matter which we have failed to settle?"

"The jongeuffrouw, sir. I am a comparative stranger in Haarlem; I do not know the illustrious lady by sight."

"True! I had not thought of that. But this omission can very easily be remedied, if you, sir, will kindly call our friend Hals. He has, if I mistake not, more than one sketch of my sister in his studio and a half-finished portrait of her as well."

"Then I pray you, sir," rejoined Diogenes airily, "do you go and acquaint our mutual friend of your desire to show me the half-finished portrait of the jongeuffrouw, for I must now exchange this gorgeous doublet of a prosperous cavalier for one more suited to this day's purpose."

And he immediately proceeded to undress without paying the slightest heed to Beresteyn's look of offended dignity. However, it was no use being angry with this independent knave; Nicolaes had found that out by now. So, inwardly fuming, but without uttering another word, he turned on his heel and went out of the room, slamming the door to behind him.

CHAPTER XII

THE PORTRAIT

WHEN Beresteyn returned to the studio in the company of Frans Hals they found Diogenes once more clad in his own well fitting and serviceable doublet. The artist looked bitterly disappointed at the sight, but naturally forbore to give vent to his feelings in the presence of his patron.

Apparently he had been told what was required, for he went straight up to a large canvas which stood at the farther end of the room with its face to the wall, and this he now placed upon the easel.

"It is an excellent likeness of my sister," said Nicolaes with his usual gracious condescension to the artist, "and does your powers of faithful portraiture vast credit, my good Hals. I pray you, sir," he added, calling to Diogenes, "come and look at it."

Among the hard lessons which varying Fortune teaches to those whom she most neglects, there is none so useful as self-control. Diogenes had learned that lesson very early in his life, and his own good humor often had to act as a mask for deeper emotions. Now, when in the picture he recognized the woman who had spoken to him the night previous, after the affray in the Dam Straat, his face in no sense expressed surprise.

That portrait of Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn is one of the finest ever painted by Frans Hals. The intense naturalness of the pose is perfect; the sweet yet imperious expression of the face is most faithfully portrayed. Diogenes saw her now very much as he had seen her the night previous, for the artist had painted the young head against a dark background, and it stood, delicate as a flower, right out of the canvas and in full light.

The mouth smiled as it had done the preceding night when first she caught sight of the ludicrous apparition of one philosopher astride on the shoulders of the other. The eyes looked grave, as they had done when she humbly yet gracefully begged pardon for her levity. The chin was uptilted as it had been the night before, when she made with haughty condescension her offers of patronage to the penniless adventurer; and there was the little hand, soft and smooth as the petal of a rose, which had rested for one moment against his lips.

And looking on the picture of this young girl, Diogenes remembered the words which her own brother had spoken to him only a few moments before:

"Her honor and her safety are forfeit to me. I would kill you if you cheated me, but I would not even then regret what I had done."

The daughter of the rich city burgher was of course less than nothing to the nameless carver of his own fortunes. She was as far removed from his sphere of life as were the stars from the Zuyder Zee; nor did women as a sex play any serious part in his schemes for the future. But at the recollection of those callous and selfish words, Diogenes felt a wave of fury rushing through his blood. The same rage seized his temper now as when, seeing a lout once pluck out the feathers of a song bird, he had fallen on him with fists and stick and left him lying bruised and half dead in a ditch.

But the hard lesson learned early in life stood him in good stead. He crossed his arms over his broad chest. Anon his well shaped hand went up to his mustache and it almost seemed as if the slender fingers smoothed away the traces of that wave of wrath which had swept over him so unaccountably just now, leaving upon his face only those lines of mockery and of good humor which a nature redolent of sunshine had rendered indelible.

"What think you of it, sir?" asked Beresteyn impatiently, seeing that Diogenes seemed inclined to linger over-long in his contemplation of the picture.

"I think, sir," replied the other, "that the picture, once seen, would forever be imprinted on the memory."

"Ah! It pleases me to hear you say that. I think, too, that it does our friend Hals here infinite credit. You must finish that picture soon, my good Frans. My father, I know, is prepared to pay you well for it."

Then he turned once more to Diogenes. "I'll take my leave now, sir," he said, "and must thank you for so kindly listening to my proposals. Hals, I thank you for the hospitality of your house. We meet again soon, I hope."

He took up his hat and almost in spite of himself he acknowledged Diogenes's parting bow with one equally courteous. Patron and employee stood henceforth on equal terms.

"If you desire to see me again today,

sir," he said, before finally taking his leave, "I shall be in the *tapperij* of 'The Lame Cow' between the hours of four and five, and entirely at your service."

After that he walked out of the room, escorted by Frans Hals; and Diogenes, who had remained alone in the big, bare studio, stood in front of Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn's portrait and had another long look at it.



A WHIMSICAL smile sat around his lips even as they apostrophized the image that looked so gravely on him out of the canvas.

"You poor, young, delicate creature!" he murmured. "What of your imperious little ways now? Your offers of condescension, your gracious wiping of your dainty shoes on the commoner herd of humanity? Your own brother has thrown you on the mercy of a rogue, eh? A rogue whose valor must needs be rewarded by money and patronage! Will you recognize him tonight, I wonder, as the rogue he really is? The rogue paid to do work that is too dirty for exalted gentlemen's hands to touch? How you will loathe him after tonight!"

He drew in his breath with a quaint little sigh that had a thought of sadness in it, and turned away from the picture just as Frans Hals reentered the room.

"When this picture is finished," he said at once to his friend, "your name, my dear Hals, will ring throughout Europe."

"'Tis your picture I want to finish," said the other reproachfully. "I have such a fine chance of selling it the day after to-morrow."

"Why the day after to-morrow?"

"The Burgomaster, Mynheer van der Meer, comes to visit my studio. He liked the beginnings of the picture very much when he saw it, and told me then that he would come to look at it again and would probably buy it."

"I can be back here in less than three weeks. You can finish the picture then. The Burgomaster will wait."

The artist sighed a plaintive little sigh and shrugged his shoulders with an air of hopelessness.

"You don't know what these people are," he said. "They will buy a picture when the fancy seizes them. A month later they will mayhap not even look at it. Besides which, the Burgomaster goes to Amsterdam next week. He will visit Rembrandt's

studio, and probably buy a picture there——"

His speech meandered on, dully and tonelessly, losing itself finally in incoherent mutterings. Diogenes looked on him with good-natured contempt.

"And you would lick the boots of such rabble!" he said.

"I have a wife and a growing family," rejoined the artist. "We must all live."

"I don't see the necessity," quoth Diogenes lightly, "not at that price in any case. You must live, of course, my dear Hals," he continued, "because you are a genius and help to fill this ugly gray world with your magnificent works; but why should your wife and family live at the expense of your manhood?"

Then, seeing the look of horror which his tirade had called forth in the face of his friend, he said with more seriousness—

"Would the price of that picture be of such vital importance, then?"

"It is not the money so much," rejoined Frans Hals, "though Heaven knows that that too would be acceptable, but 'tis the glory of it to which I had aspired. This picture to hang in the Stadhuis, mayhap in the reception hall, has been my dream these weeks past. Not only would all the wealthy burghers of Haarlem see it there, but all the civic dignitaries of other cities when they come here on a visit; aye, and the foreign ambassadors, too, who often come to Haarlem. My fame then would indeed ring throughout Europe. . . . It is very hard that you should disappoint me so."

While he went on mumbling in his feeble, querulous voice, Diogenes had been pacing up and down the floor, apparently struggling with insistent thoughts. There was quite a suspicion of a frown upon his smooth brow, but he said nothing until his friend had finished speaking. Then he ceased his restless pacing and placed a hand upon Hals's shoulder.

"Look here, old friend," he said, "this will never do. It seems as if I, by leaving you in the lurch today, stood in the way of your advancement and of your fortune. That of course will never do," he reiterated earnestly. "You, the friend who, like last night, is always ready to give me food and shelter when I am without a groat in my pocket! You, who picked me up ten years ago, a shoeless ragamuffin wandering homeless in the streets, and gave me a hot

supper and a bed, knowing nothing about me save that I was starving! For that was the beginning of our friendship, was it not, old Frans?"

"Of course it was," assented the other. "But that was long ago. You have more than repaid me since then—when you had the means. . . . And now there is the picture——"

"To repay a debt is not always to be rid of an obligation. How can I, then, leave you in the lurch now?"

"Why can not you stay and sit for me today? The light is fairly good——"

"I can not stay now, dear old friend," said the other earnestly. "On my honor I would do my duty by you now if I only could. I have business of the utmost importance to transact today and must see to it forthwith."

"Then why not tomorrow? I could work on the doublet and the lace collar today, by putting them on a dummy model. All I want is a good long sitting from you for the head. . . . I could almost finish the picture tomorrow," he pleaded in his peevish, melancholy voice. "And the Burgomaster comes on the next day."



DIOGENES was silent for a while. Again that puzzled frown appeared between his brows. Tomorrow he should be leaving Leyden on his way to Rotterdam. One thousand guilders would be in his pocket and three thousand more would be waiting for him at the end of his journey. . . . Tomorrow! . . .

Frans Hals's keen, restless eyes followed every varying expression in the face he knew so well.

"Why should you not give up your day to me tomorrow?" he murmured peevishly. "You have nothing to do."

"Why indeed not?" said the other with a sudden recrudescence of his usual gaiety. "I can do it, old compeer! *Dondersteen*, but I should be a *smeerlap* if I did not. Wait one moment. . . . Let me just think. . . . Yes! I have the way clear in my mind now. . . . I will be here as early as I was today."

"By half-past seven o'clock the light is tolerable," said the artist.

"By half-past seven, then, I shall have donned the doublet, and will not move off that platform unless you bid me, until the shadows have gathered in, in the wake of

the setting sun. After that," he added with his accustomed merry laugh, "let mynheer the Burgomaster come; your picture shall not hang fire because of me."

"That's brave!" said Frans Hals more cheerily. "If you will come I can do it. You will see how advanced that sleeve and collar will be by half-past seven tomorrow."

His voice had quite a ring in it now. He fussed about in his studio, rearranged the picture on the easel, and put aside the portrait of Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn. Diogenes watched him with amusement, but the frown had not quite disappeared from his brow. He had made two promises, both of which he would have to fulfil at all costs.

Just now, the thought came to him in a flash how he could help his friend and yet keep his word to Beresteyn. A quick plan had formed itself in his mind for accomplishing this. He saw in a mental vision the forced run back on the ice to Haarlem and back again in the wake of the sleigh. It could be done with much pluck and endurance and a modicum of good luck, and already his mind was made up to it, whatever the cost in fatigue or privations might be.

But time was pressing now. After a renewed and most solemn promise he took leave of Frans Hals, who already was too deeply absorbed in work to take much notice of his friend. The glorious, self-centered selfishness of genius was in him. He cared absolutely nothing for any worry or trouble he might cause to the other man by his demand for that sitting on the morrow. The picture mattered, nothing else; and the artist never even asked his friend if he would suffer inconvenience or worse by sacrificing his day to it tomorrow.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPANISH WENCH

AN HOUR later, in the taproom of "The Lane Cow," Diogenes had finished explaining to his brother philosophers the work which he had in hand and for which he required their help. The explanation had begun with the words filled with portentous charm—

"There will be five hundred guilders for each of you at the end of our journey."

And they knew from many and varied experiences of adventures undertaken in

amicable trilogy that Diogenes would be as good as his word. For the rest they did not greatly trouble themselves.

It was good to hear the guilders jingling in Diogenes's wallet, and though he was sparing of them in the matter of heady ale or strong wines, he scattered them liberally enough on smoked sausage, fried livers and the many other delicacies for which his brother philosophers had a fancy and for which the kitchen of "The Lame Cow" was famous.

When they had all eaten enough and made merry on a little good ale and the prospects of the adventure, they parted on the doorstep of the tavern—Diogenes to attend to business, the other two to see to the horses and the sleigh for this night. These were to be in readiness at the point where the Street of the Holy Cross abuts on the left bank of the Oude Gracht.

Three good saddle horses were wanted—thick-set Flanders mares, rough-shod against the slippery roads; also a covered sledge with two equally reliable horses harnessed therein and a coachman of sober appearance on the box. Socrates and Pythagoras were required to scour the city for these, and to bespeak them for seven o'clock that evening. There were also some warm rugs and wraps to be bought, for the night would be bitterly cold and the lady not prepared mayhap with a cloak sufficiently heavy for a lengthy journey.

All these matters having been agreed upon, Socrates and Pythagoras started to walk toward the eastern portion of the city, where several posting-inns were situated and where they hoped to find the conveyance which they required, as well as the necessary horses. Diogenes on the other hand turned his steps deliberately southward.

After a few minutes' brisk walking he found himself at the farther end of the Kleine Straat, where stood the rickety, half-mildewed and wholly insalubrious house which had previously sheltered him. The door, as usual, was loose upon its hinges and swinging backward and forward in the draft with a squeaking, melancholy sound.

Diogenes pushed it farther open and went in. The same fetid smells, peculiar to all the houses in this quarter of the city, greeted his nostrils, and from the depths of the dark and dank passage a dog gave a perfunctory bark.

Without hesitation Diogenes now began

the ascent of the creaking stairs, his heavy footfall echoing through the silent house. On one or two of the landings as he mounted he was greeted by pale, inquiring faces and round, inquisitive eyes, whilst ghostlike forms emerged out of hidden burrows for a moment to look on the noisy visitor and then with equal furtiveness vanished again.

On the topmost landing he halted. Here a small skylight in the roof afforded a modicum of light. Two doors confronted him; he went up to one of them and knocked on it loudly with his fist.

Then he waited; not with great patience, but with his ear glued to the door listening to the sounds within. It almost seemed as if the room beyond was the abode of the dead, for not a sound reached the listener's ear. He knocked again, more loudly this time and more insistently. Still no response. At the other door on the opposite side of the landing a female figure appeared wrapped in a worsted rug, and a head half hidden by a linen coif was thrust forward out of the darkness behind it.



"THEY won't answer you," said the apparition curtly. "They are strangers—only came last night; but all this morning, when the landlord or his wife knocked at the door, they simply would not open it."

"But I am a friend," said Diogenes; "the best, I fancy, that these poor folk have."

"They won't answer you," reiterated the female apparition dolefully, and once more retired into its burrow.

The situation was becoming irritating. Diogenes put his mouth against the keyhole and shouted: "What ho, there! Open!" as lustily as his powerful lungs would allow.

"*Dondersteen!*" he exclaimed, when even then he received no response.

But, strange to relate, no sooner was this expletive out of his mouth than there came a cry like that of a frightened small animal, followed by a patter of naked feet upon a naked floor. The next moment the door was thrown invitingly open, and Diogenes was able to step across its threshold.

"*Dondersteen!*" he ejaculated once more. "Hadst thou not opened, wench, I would within the next few seconds have battered in the door."

The woman stood looking at him with great, dark eyes in which joy, surprise and fear struggled for mastery. Her hair,

though still unruly, was coiled around her head; her shift and kirtle were neatly fastened; but her legs and feet were bare, and above the shift her neck and shoulders appeared colorless and attenuated. Eyes and hair were dark, and her skin had the olive tint of the South, but her lips at this moment looked bloodless and there was the look of starvation in her wan face.

Diogenes walked past her into the inner room. The old man was lying on the bed. On the coverlet close to him a much fingered prayer book lay open. The woman slipped noiselessly past the visitor and quietly put the prayer book away.

"You have come to tell us that we must go," she said in an undertone.

"Indeed, that was not my purpose," he replied gaily. "I have come, on the contrary, to bring you good news, and it was foolish of you to keep me dangling on your doorstep for so long."

"The landlord hates us," she murmured, "because you forced him last night to take us in. He came thundering at the door this morning, and threatened to eject us as vagabonds or to denounce us as Spanish spies."

"I would not open the door to him and he shouted his threats at us through the keyhole. When you knocked just now I was frightened. I thought that he had come back."

Her voice was low; and, though she spoke Dutch fluently, her throat had in it the guttural notes of her native land. A touch of the Gipsy there must be in her, thought Diogenes as he looked with sudden interest on the woman before him—the dark skin, the long, supple limbs, the velvety eyes with their submissive, terrified look.

With embarrassed movements she offered the only chair in the room to her visitor; then cast shy, timorous glances on him as he refused to sit, preferring to lean his tall figure against the whitewashed wall. She thought that never in her life had she seen any man so splendid, and her look of admiration told him so without disguise.

"Well," he said with his quaint smile, "I am not the landlord, nor yet an enemy. Art thou convinced of that?"

"Yes, I am!" she said with a little sigh, as she turned away from him in order to attend to the old man, who was moaning peevishly in the bed.



"HE HAS lost the use of speech," she said to Diogenes, as soon as she had seen to the old man's wants, "and today he is so crippled that he can scarcely move."

"We ought never to have come to this horrible, cold part of the country," she added with a sudden tone of fierce resentment. "I think that we shall both die of misery before we leave it again."

"Why did you come here, then, at all?" asked Diogenes.

"We wandered hither because we heard that the people in this city were so rich. I was born not far from here and so was my mother, but my father is a native of Spain. In France, in Brabant, where we wandered before, we always earned a good living by begging at the church doors, but here the people are so hard!"

"You will have to wander back to Spain."

"Yes," she said sullenly, "as soon as I have earned a little money and father is able to move, neither of which seems very likely just now."

"Ah!" he said cheerily. "That is, wench, where I proclaim thee wrong! I do not know when thy father will be able to move, but I can tell thee at this very moment where and how thou canst earn fifty guilders, which should take thee quite a long way toward Spain."

She looked up at him, and once more that glance of joy and of surprise crept into her eyes which had seemed so full of vindictive anger just now. With the surprise and the joy there also mingled the admiration, the sense of well-being in his presence.

Already he had filled the bare, squalid room with his breezy personality, with his swagger and with his laughter. His ringing voice had aroused the echoes that slept in the moldy rafters and frightened the mice that dwelt in the wainscoting and now scampered hurriedly away.

"I!" she said with obvious incredulity. "I, to earn fifty guilders! I have not earned so much in any six months of my life."

"Perhaps not," he rejoined gaily. "But I can promise thee this; that the fifty guilders will be thine this evening, if thou wilt render me a simple service."

"Render thee a service!" she said, and her low voice sounded quite cooing and gentle. "I would thank God on my knees if I could render thee a service. Didst thou not save my life——"

"By thy leave we'll not talk of that matter. 'Tis over and done with now. The service I would ask of thee, though 'tis simple enough to perform, I could not ask of any one else but thee. If thou'lt do it, I shall be more than repaid."

"Name it, sir," she said simply.

"Dost know the bank of the Oude Gracht?" he asked.

"Well," she replied.

"Dost know the Oudenvrouwenhuis situated there?"

"Yes!"

"Next to its outer walls there is a narrow passage which leads to the Remonstrant Chapel of St. Pieter."

"There is, sir. I know it."

"This evening at seven o'clock, then, thou'lt take thy stand at the corner of this passage facing the Oude Gracht: and there thou wilt remain to ask alms from the passers-by. Thou'rt not afraid?"

"Afraid of what, sir?"

"The spot is lonely; the passage leads nowhere except to the Chapel, which has been deserted these past five years."

"I am not afraid."

"That's brave! After evensong is over at the cathedral, one or two people will no doubt come thy way. Thou'lt beg them for alms in the usual way. But anon a lady will come accompanied by a duenna and preceded by two serving-men carrying lanterns. From her thou must ask insistently, and tell her as sad a tale of woe as thou canst think on, keeping well within the narrow passage and inducing her to follow thee."

"How shall I know the lady? There may be others who go past that way, and who might also be escorted by a woman and two serving-men."

"The men wear green and purple livery, with peaked green caps trimmed with fur," said Diogenes, supplying these details from the memory of his encounter with the jonge-juffrouw. "Thou canst not mistake them even in the dark, for the light of the lanterns which they carry will be upon them. But I will be in the passage close behind thee. When I see her coming I will warn thee."

"I understand," she said, nodding her head slowly once or twice as if she were brooding over what she thought. "But surely that is not all that I can do for thee."

"Indeed it is, and therefore none too difficult. Having drawn the lady into the

shadow by thy talk, contrive to speak to her, telling her of thy troubles. If anything occurs after that to surprise or mayhap frighten thee, pay no heed to it, but take at once to thy heels and run straight home here, without looking to right or left. No one will molest thee, I give thee my word."

"I understand!" she reiterated once more.

"And wilt thou do as I ask?"

"Of course. My life is thine; thou didst save it twice. Thou hast but to command and I will obey."

"We'll call it that," he said lightly, "since it seems to please thee. Tonight, then, at seven o'clock, I, too, will be on the spot to place the fifty guilders in thy hand."



"FIFTY guilders!" she exclaimed, almost with ecstasy, and pressed her hands to her breast. "My father and I need not starve or be homeless the whole of this Winter!"

"Thou'lt make tracks for Spain very soon," he rejoined carelessly, for he had accomplished his business and was making ready to go. She threw him a strange look, half defiant yet almost reproachful.

"Perhaps!" she said curtly.

He took leave of her in his usual pleasant, airy manner, smiling at her earnestness and at her looks, that reminded him of a starving dog which he had once picked up in the streets of Prague and kept and fed for a time, until he found it a permanent home. When he gave the dog away to some kindly people who promised to treat it well, it threw him, at parting, just such a look as dwelt in this girl's eyes now.

The old cripple on the bed had fallen into a torpor-like sleep. Diogenes cast a compassionate glance on him.

"Thou canst take him to better quarters in a day or two," he said, "and mayhap give him some good food. . . . *Dondersteent!*" he exclaimed suddenly. "What art doing, girl?"

She had stooped and kissed his hand. He drew it away almost roughly, but at the timid look of humble apology which she raised to him, he said gently:

"By St. Bavon, thou'rt a funny child! Well? What is it now?" he asked; for she stood hesitating before him with a question obviously hovering on her lips.

"I dare not," she murmured.

"Art afraid of me, then?"

"A little."

"Yet there is something thou desirest to ask?"

"Yes."

"What is it? Quickly now, for I must be going."

She waited for a moment or two trying to gain courage, whilst he watched her, greatly amused.

"What is it?" he reiterated more impatiently.

Then a murmur escaped her lips—

"The lady?"

"Yes. What of her."

"Thou dost love her?" she stammered, "and wilt abduct her tonight because of thy love for her?"

For a second or two he looked on her in blank amazement, wondering whether he had entrusted this vital business to a semi-imbecile.

Then, seeing that indeed she appeared to be in deadly earnest, and that her great, inquiring, but perfectly lucid eyes were fixed upon him with mute insistence, he threw back his head and laughed till the very rafters of the low room shook with the echo of his merriment.

"*Dondersteent!*" he said, as soon as he felt that he could speak again. "But thou truly art a strange wench. Whatever did put that idea into thy head?"

"Thou dost propose to abduct her, I know that," she said more firmly. "I am no fool, and I understand I am to be the decoy. The dark passage, the lonely spot, thy presence there—and then the occurrence, as thou saidst, that might surprise or frighten me. I am no fool," she repeated sullenly. "I understand."

"Apparently," he retorted dryly.

"Thou dost love her?" she insisted.

"What is it to thee?"

"No matter. Only tell me this; dost thou love her?"

"If I said yes," he asked with his whimsical smile, "wouldst refuse to help me?"

"Oh, no!"

"And if I said no?"

"I should be glad," she said simply.

"Then we'll say no!" he concluded lightly, "for I would like to see thee glad."

And he had his wish, for quite a joyous smile lit up her small, pinched face. She tripped quite briskly to the door and held it open for him.

"If thou desirest to speak with me again," she said, as he finally took his leave, "give

four raps on the door at marked intervals. I would fly to open it then."

He thanked her and went downstairs, humming a lively tune and never once turning to look on her again. And yet she was leaning over the rickety banisters watching his slowly descending figure until it disappeared in the gloom.

CHAPTER XIV

AFTER EVENSONG

JONGEJUFFROUW BERESTEYN had spent many hours in church this New Year's Day, 1624. In spite of the inclemency of the weather she had attended morning prayer and holy communion, and now she was back again for evensong.

The cathedral was not very full for it. Most people were making merry at home to celebrate the festival; so Gilda had a corner of the sacred building all to herself, where she could think matters over silently and with the help of prayer. The secret of which she had gained knowledge was weighing heavily on her soul, and heartrending doubts had assailed her all night and throughout the day.

How could she know what was the right thing to do? To allow a crime of which she had foreknowledge to be committed without raising a finger to prevent it? Or to betray her own brother and his friends—a betrayal which would inevitably lead them to the scaffold?

Her father was, of course, her great refuge, and tonight through evensong she prayed to God to guide her as to whether she should tell everything to her father or not. She had warned Nicolaes that she might do so, and yet her very soul shrank from the act which to many would seem so like betrayal.

Cornelius Beresteyn was a man of rigid principles and unyielding integrity. What he might do with the knowledge of the conspiracy in which his own son was taking a leading part, no one, not even his daughter, could foresee. In no case would she act hurriedly.

She hoped against all hope that mayhap Nicolaes would see his own treachery in its true light and turn from it before it was too late, or that God would give her some unmistakable sign of what He willed her to do.

Perplexed and wretched, she stayed long

on her knees and left the church after every one else. The night was dark, and though the snow had left off falling momentarily the usual frosty mist hung over the city. Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn wrapped her furlined cloak closely around her shoulders and started on her homeward walk, with Maria by her side and Jakob and Piet on in front carrying their lanterns.

Her way took her first across the Groote Markt, then down the Hout Straat until she reached the Oude Gracht. Here her two serving-men kept quite close in front of her, for the embankment was lonely and a well known resort for evildoers, who found refuge in the several dark passages that run at right angles from the canal and have no outlet at their farther end.

Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn followed rapidly in the wake of her lantern bearers and keeping Maria, who was always timorous on dark nights and in lonely places, quite close to her elbow. Every footstep of the way was familiar to her. Now the ground was frozen hard and the covering of snow crisp beneath her feet as she walked, but in the Autumn and the Spring the mud here was ankle deep, save on one or two rare spots in front of the better houses or public buildings, where a few stones formed a piece of dry pavement.

Such a spot was the front of the Ouden-vrouwenhuis with its wide, oaken gateway and high, brick walls. The unmade road here was always swept neatly and tidily. During the rainy seasons the mud was washed carefully away and in the Winter it was kept free from snow.

Beyond it was a narrow passage which led to the Chapel of St. Pieter, now disused since the Remonstrants had fallen into such bad odor after the death of Jan van Olden Barnveldt and the treachery of his sons. The corner of this passage was a favorite haunt for beggars, but only for the humbler ones—since there is a hierarchy even amongst beggars, and the more prosperous ones, those known to the town guard and the night watchmen, flocked around the church porches.

In this spot, where there were but a few passers-by, only those poor wretches came who mayhap had something to hide from the watchful eyes of the guardians of the city—those who had been in prison or had deserted from the army, or were known to be rogues and thieves.

Gilda Beresteyn, who had a soft heart, always kept a few kreutzers in the palm of her hand ready to give to any of these poor outcasts who happened to beg for alms along the embankment, but she never liked to stop here in order to give those other alms which she knew were oft more acceptable than money—the alms of kindly words.



TONIGHT, however, she herself felt miserable and lonely; and the voice that came to her out of the darkness of the narrow passage which leads to the Chapel of St. Pieter was peculiarly plaintive and sweet.

"For the love of Christ, gentle lady!" murmured the voice softly.

Gilda stopped, ready with the kreutzers in her hand. But it was very dark just here and the snow appeared too deep to traverse, she could not see the melancholy speaker; though she knew of course that it was a woman.

"Bring the lantern a little nearer, Jakob," she said.

"Do not stop, mejuffrouw, to parley with any of these scamps," said Maria, as she clung fearsomely to her mistress's cloak.

"For the love of Christ, gentle lady!" sighed the pitiable voice out of the darkness again.

Jakob brought the lantern nearer.

Some half a dozen steps up the passage a pathetic little figure appeared to view; the figure of a woman—a mere girl—with ragged shift and bare legs half buried in the depths of the snow.

Gilda without hesitation went up to her, money in hand, her own feet sinking ankle deep into the cold, white carpet below. The girl retreated as the kind lady advanced, apparently scared by the two men who had paused, one at each corner of the passage, holding their lanterns well above their heads.

"Don't be frightened, girl," said Gilda Beresteyn gently. "Here's a little money. You look so cold, poor child!"

The next moment a double cry behind her caused her to turn in a trice. She had only just time to take in the terrifying fact that Piet and Jakob had dropped their lanterns to the ground even as thick, dark cloths were thrown over their heads, before she found herself firmly seized around the waist by a powerful arm whilst some kind of scarf was wound quickly around her face.

She had not the time to scream; the enveloping scarf smothered her cry even as it formed in her throat. The last thing of which she was clearly conscious was of a voice—which strangely enough sounded familiar—saying hurriedly—

"Here, take thy money, girl, and run home now as fast as thy feet will take thee."

After that, though she was never totally unconscious, she was only dimly aware of what happened to her. She certainly felt herself lifted off the ground and carried for some considerable distance. What seemed to her a long, long time afterward she became aware that she was lying on her back and that there was a smell of sweet hay and fresh straw around her.

Close to her ear there was the sound of a woman moaning. The scarf still covered her face, but it had been loosened so that she could breathe, and presently, when she opened her eyes, she found that the scarf only covered her mouth.

As she lay on her back she could see nothing above her. She was not cold, for the straw around her formed a warm bed, and her cloak had been carefully arranged so as to cover her completely, whilst her feet were wrapped up snugly in a rug.

It was only when complete consciousness returned to her that she realized that she was lying in an object that moved. She became conscious of the jingling of harness and of occasional unpleasant jolting, whilst the darkness overhead was obviously caused by the roof of a vehicle.

She tried to raise herself on her elbow, but she discovered that loose though quite efficient bonds held her pinioned down. Her arms, however, were free and she put out her hand in the direction whence came the muffled sound of a woman moaning.

"Lord! Almighty! Lord in Heaven!" and many more appeals of a like character escaped the lips of Gilda's companion in misfortune.

"Maria! Is it thou?" said Gilda in a whisper.

Her hand went groping in the dark until it encountered first a cloak, then an arm and finally a head, apparently also enveloped in a cloth.

"Lord God Almighty!" sighed the other woman feebly through the drapery. "Is it *me juffrouw?*"

"Yes, Maria, it is I!" whispered Gilda.

"Whither are they taking us, thinkest thou?"

"To some lonely spot where they can conveniently murder us!" murmured Maria with a moan of anguish.

"But what became of Piet and Jakob?"

"Murdered, probably. The cowards could not defend us."



GILDA strained her ears to listen. She hoped by certain sounds to make out at least in which direction she was being carried away. Above the rattle and jingle of the harness she could hear at times the measured tramp of horses trotting in the rear. She thought at one time that the sleigh went over the wooden bridge on the Spaarne and then under the echoing portals of one of the city gates.

Her head after a while began to ache terribly and her eyes felt as if they were seared with coal. Of course she lost all count of time. It seemed an eternity since she had spoken to the girl in the dark passage which leads to the Chapel of St. Peter.

Maria, who lay beside her, moaned incessantly for a while like a fretful child, but presently she became silent. Perhaps she had gone to sleep. The night air which found its way through the chinks of the hood came more keen and biting against Gilda's face. It cooled her eyes and eased the throbbing of her head. She felt very tired and as if her body had been bruised all over.

The noises around her became more monotonous. The tramping of the horses in the rear of the sleigh sounded muffled and subdued. Drowsiness overcame Gilda Beresteyn and she fell into a troubled, half-waking sleep.

CHAPTER XV

THE HALT AT BENNEBROCK

FOR a long time she had been half awake—ever since the vehicle had stopped, which must have been ages and ages ago. She had lain in a kind of torpor, various sounds coming to her ear as through the veil of dreams. There was Maria snoring contentedly close by, and the horses champng their bits and pawing the hard-frozen ground. Also, there was the murmur of voices, subdued and muffled; but she could not distinguish words.

Not for a long time at any rate—an interminably long time!

Her body and limbs felt quite numb, pleasantly warm under the rugs and cloaks; only her face rejoiced in the cold blast that played around it and kept her forehead and eyes cool.

Once it seemed to her as if out of the darkness more than one pair of eyes were looking down on her, and she had the sense as of a warm rapid breath that mingled with the pure frosty air. After which some one murmured—

"She is still unconscious."

"I think not," was the whispered reply.

She lay quite still, in case those eyes came to look on her again. The murmuring voices sounded quite close to the sleigh now. Soon she found that by holding her breath and straining her every listening faculty she could detach the words that struck her ear from all the other sounds around her.

Two men, she thought, were speaking, but their voices were never once raised above a whisper.

"You are satisfied?" she heard one of these saying quite distinctly.

"Entirely!" was the response.

"The letter to Ben Isaje?"

"I am not like to lose it."

"Hush! I heard a sound from under the hood."

"'Tis only the old woman snoring."

"I wish you could have found a more comfortable sledge."

"There was none to be had in Haarlem today. But we'll easily get one in Leyden."

In Leyden! Gilda's numbed body quivered with horror. She was being taken to Leyden and still farther on by sleigh! Her thoughts at present were still chaotic; but gradually she was sorting them out, one or two becoming clearer, more insistent than the rest.

"I would like the *jongejouffrouw* to have something to eat and drink," came once more in whispers from out the darkness. "I fear that she will be faint!"

"No, no!" came the prompt, peremptory reply. "It would be madness to let her realize so soon where she is. She knows this place well."

A halt on the way to Leyden! And thence a further journey by sledge! Gilda's thoughts were distinctly less chaotic already. She was beginning to marshal them

up in her mind, together with her recollections of the events of the past twenty-four hours. The darkness around her, which was intense, and the numbness of her body all helped her to concentrate her faculties on these recollections first and on the obvious conclusions based upon her position at the present moment.

She was being silenced effectually because of the knowledge which she had gained in the cathedral the night before. The Lord of Stoutenburg, frightened for his plans, was causing her to be put out of his way. Never for a moment did she suspect her own brother in this. It was that conscienceless, ambitious, treacherous Stoutenburg! At most her brother was blindly acquiescent in this infamy.

Gilda was not afraid, not even when this conviction became fully matured in her mind. She was not afraid for herself, although for one brief moment the thought did cross her mind that mayhap she had been taken out of Haarlem only in order that her death might be more secretly encompassed.

But she was cast in a firmer mold than most women of her rank and wealth would be. She came of a race that had faced misery, torture and death for over a century for the sake of its own independence of life and of faith, and was ready to continue the struggle for another hundred years if need be for the same ideals, making the same sacrifices in order to attain it.

Gilda Beresteyn gave but little thought to her own safety. If Stoutenburg's dastardly conspiracy against the Stadtholder was successful and involved her own brother life would be of little value to her. Nicolaes's act of treachery would break her father's heart. What matter if she herself lived to witness all that misery or not?

No, it was her helplessness at this moment that caused her the most excruciating soul-agony. She had been trapped and was being cast aside like a noxious beast that is in the way of men. Like a child that is unruly and has listened at the keyhole of the door, she was being punished and rendered harmless.



INDEED, she had no fear for her safety. The few words which she had heard, the presence of Maria, all tended to point out that there would be no direct attempt against her life. It was

only of that awful crime that she thought, that crime which she had so fondly hoped that she might yet frustrate. It was of the Stadtholder's safety that she thought, and of her brother's sin.

She thought also of her poor father who, ignorant of the events which had brought about this infamous abduction, would be near killing himself with sorrow at the mysterious disappearance of his only daughter. Piet and Jakob would tell how they had been set on in the dark. Footpads would be suspected. The countryside where they usually have their haunts would be scoured for them. But the highroad leading to Leyden would never mayhap be watched, and certainly a sleigh under escort would never draw the attention of the guardians of the peace.

While these thoughts whirled wildly in her brain it seemed that preparations had been and were being made for departure. She heard some whispered words again—

"Where will you put up at Leyden?"

"At 'The White Goat.' I know the landlord well."

"Will he be awake at so late an hour?"

"I will ride ahead and arouse his household. They shall be prepared for our coming."

"But——"

"You seem to forget, sir," came in somewhat louder tones, "that all the arrangements for this journey were to be left entirely to my discretion."

For the moment Gilda could catch no further words distinctly. Whether a quarrel had ensued or not she could not conjecture, but obviously the two speakers had gone some little distance away from the sledge. All that she could hear was—after a brief while of silence—a quaint, muffled laugh which, though it scarce was distinguishable from the murmur of the wind, so soft was it, nevertheless betrayed to her keenly sensitive ear an undercurrent of good-humored irony.

Again there seemed something familiar to her in the sound.

After this there was renewed tramping of heavy feet on the snow-covered ground, the clang of bits and chains, the creaking of traces, the subdued call of encouragement to horses.

"Forward!" came a cheery voice from the rear.

Once more they were on the move; on the way to Leyden, distant six leagues from her home. Gilda could have cried out now in her misery. She pictured her father, broken-hearted, all through the night sending messengers hither and thither to the various gates of the city, unable no doubt to get satisfactory information at this late hour. She pictured Nicolaes feigning ignorance of the whole thing, making pretense of anxiety and grief.

Torturing thoughts kept her awake, though her body was racked with fatigue. The night was bitterly cold, and the wind, now that they had reached open country, cut at times across her face like a knife.

The sledge glided along with great swiftness now over the smooth, thick carpet of snow that covered the long, straight road. Gilda knew that the sea was not far off; but she also knew that every moment now she was being dragged farther and farther away from the chance of averting from her father and from her house the black catastrophe of disgrace which threatened them.

CHAPTER XVI

LEYDEN

IT SEEMED that from some church tower far away a clock struck the hour of midnight when the sledge at last came to a halt.

Worn out with nerve-racking thoughts, as well as with the cruel monotony of the past four hours, Gilda felt her soul and body numb and lifeless as a stone. There were much running and shouting around the vehicle, with sounds of horses' hoofs resounding against rough cobblestones, of calls for hostler and landlord.

Then for a while comparative quietude. Maria still snored unperturbed, and Gilda, wide-eyed and with beating heart, awaited further events. First the hood of the sledge in which she lay was lifted off. She could hear the ropes and straps being undone, the tramp of feet all around her, and an occasional volley of impatient oaths. Then out of the darkness a pleasant voice called her somewhat peremptorily by name—

"Mejuffrouw Beresteyn!"

She did not reply, but lay quite still, with wide-open eyes like a bird that has been tracked and knows that it is watched.

Maria uttered a loud groan and tried to roll over on her side.

"Where have those murderers taken us to now?" she muttered through the veil that still enveloped her mouth.

The pleasant voice close to Gilda's ear now called out more loudly:

"Here, Pythagoras, Socrates! Lift the mevrouw out of the sleigh and carry her up to the room which the landlord hath prepared for the ladies."

Maria immediately gave vent to violent shrieks of protest.

"How dare ye touch me!" she screamed at the top of her voice. "Ye murdering devils! Dare but lay a finger on a respectable woman and God will punish you with pestilence and dislocation and——"

It must be presumed that neither Pythagoras nor Socrates was greatly upset by the mevrouw's curses, for Gilda, who was on the alert for every movement and for every sound, was well aware that Maria's highly respectable person was presently seized by firm hands, that the shawl around her face was pressed more tightly against her mouth—for her screams sounded more muffled—and that despite her struggles, her cries and her kicking, she was presently lifted bodily out of the sledge.

When these disquieting sounds had died down the same pleasant voice broke in once again on Gilda's obstinate silence.

"Mejuffrouw Berestejn!" it reiterated once again.

"*Dondersteen!* but 'tis no use lying mum there and pretending to be asleep," it continued after a while, since Gilda certainly had taken no notice of the call. "That old woman made enough noise to wake the dead."

Still not a sound from Gilda, who, more like a cowering bird than ever, was trying with widely dilated eyes to pierce the darkness around her in order to see something of the enemy. She saw the outline of a plumed hat like a patch of ink against the sky above, and also a pair of very broad shoulders that were stooping toward the floor of the sledge.

"Hey!" shouted the enemy with imperturbable cheerfulness. "Leave that door wide open; I'll carry the jongejjuffrouw in myself. She seems to be unconscious."

The words aroused Gilda out of her attitude of rigid silence—the words, which she looked on as an awful threat, and also the

sensation that the loose bonds which had pinioned her down to the vehicle were being undone.

"I am not unconscious," she said aloud and quite calmly, "and was quite aware just now that you laid rough hands on a helpless woman. Since I am equally helpless and in your power I pray you to command what I must do."

"Come, that's brave! I knew that you could not be asleep," rejoined the enemy with inveterate good humor. "But for the moment, mejuffrouw, I must ask you to descend from this sleigh. It has been a vastly uncomfortable vehicle for you to travel in, I fear me, but it was the best that we could get in Haarlem on New Year's Day. If you will deign to enter this humble hostelry you will find the mevrouw there, a moderately good supper and something resembling a bed, all of which, I am thinking, will be highly acceptable to you."



WHILE the enemy spoke, Gilda had a few seconds in which to reflect. Above all things she was a woman of sense and one who valued her own dignity; she knew quite well that the making of a scene outside an inn in a strange town and at this hour of the night could but result in a loss of that dignity which she so highly prized, seeing that she was entirely at the mercy of men who were not likely to yield either to her protests or to her appeals.

Therefore, when she felt that she was free to move, she made every effort to raise herself. Unfortunately the long hours of weary, motionless lying on her back had made her limbs so numb that they refused her service. She made one or two brave attempts to hide her helplessness, but when she wanted to draw up her knees, she nearly cried with the pain of trying to move them out of their cramped position.

"It were wiser, methinks," quoth the enemy, with a slight tone of mockery in his cheerful voice, "it were wiser to accept the help of my arms. They are strong, firm and not cramped. Try them, mejuffrouw. You will have no cause to regret it."

Quite involuntarily—for of a truth she shrank from the mere touch of this rascal who obviously was in the pay of Stoutenburg and doing the latter's infamous work for him—quite involuntarily, then, she

placed her hand upon the arm which he had put out as a prop for her.

It was as firm as a rock. Leaning on it somewhat heavily, she was able to struggle to her knees. This made her venturesome. She tried to stand up; but fatigue, the want of food, the excitement and anxiety which she had endured, combined with the fact that she had been in a recumbent position for many hours, caused her to turn desperately giddy. She swayed like a young sapling under the wind and would have fallen, but that the same strong arm, firm as a rock, was there to receive her ere she fell.

I suppose that dizziness deprived her of her full senses, else she would never have allowed that knave to lift her out of the sledge and then to carry her into a building and up some narrow and very steep stairs.

But this Diogenes did do, with but scant ceremony. He thought her protests foolish, and her attempts at lofty disdain pitiable. She was, after all, but a poor, helpless scrap of humanity, so slight and frail that as he carried her into the house, there was grave danger of his crushing her into nothingness as she lay in his arms.

Despite her pride and her aloofness he found it in his heart to pity her just now. Had she been fully conscious she would have hated to see herself pillowed thus against the doublet of so contemptible a knave. Here she was absolutely handed over, body and soul, to a nameless stranger who in her sight was probably no better than a menial—and this by the cynical act of one who, next to her father, was her most natural protector.

Yes indeed, he did pity her, for she seemed to him more than ever like that poor little songbird whom a lout had tortured for his own pleasure by plucking out its feathers one by one. It seemed monstrous that so delicate a creature should be the victim of men's intrigues and passions. Why, even her breath had the subtle scent of tulips as it fanned his cheeks and nostrils when he stooped in order to look on her.



IN THE meanwhile Diogenes had been as good as his word. He had pushed on to Leyden in advance of the *cortège*, had roused the landlord of this hostelry and the serving-wench and scattered money so freely that despite the lateness of the hour a large, square room—the

best in the house, and scrupulously clean as to red-tiled floor and walnut furniture—was at once put at the disposal of the ladies of so noble a traveling company.

The maids were sent flying hither and thither, one into the kitchen to make ready some hot supper, the other to the linen press to find the finest set of bed linen, all sweetly laid by in rosemary.

Diogenes, still carrying Gilda, pushed the heavy paneled door open with his foot, and without looking either to right or left of him made straight for the huge open hearth, wherein logs of pinewood had already been set ablaze, and beside which stood an armchair covered with Utrecht velvet.

Into its inviting and capacious depths he deposited his inanimate burden, and only then did he become aware of two pairs of eyes which were fixed upon him with very different expressions. A buxom wench in ample wide kirtle of striped duffel had been busy when he entered in spreading clean linen sheets upon the narrow little bed built in the paneling of the room. From under her quaint winged cap of starched lace a pair of very round eyes, blue as the Rhine, peeped in naive, undisguised admiration on the intruder, while from beneath her disordered coif Maria threw glances of deadly fury upon him.

Could looks but kill, Maria certes would have annihilated the low rascal who had dared to lay hands upon the noble *jongeffrouw*. But our friend Diogenes was not a man to be perturbed either by admiring or condemning looks. He picked up a footstool from under the table and put it under the *jongeffrouw's* feet. Then he looked about him for a pillow, and with scant ceremony took one straight out of the hands of the serving-wench who was just shaking it up ready for the bed.

His obvious intention was to place it behind the *jongeffrouw's* head, but at this act of unforgivable presumption Maria's wrath cast aside all restraint. Like a veritable fury she strode up to the insolent rascal and snatched the pillow from him, throwing him such a look of angry contempt as should have sent him groveling on his knees.

"Keep thy blood cool, *mevrouw*," he said with the best of humor. "Thy looks have already made a weak-kneed coward of me."

With the dignity of an offended turkey hen, Maria arranged the pillow herself under her mistress's head, having previously shaken it and carefully dusted off the blemish caused upon its surface by contact with an unclean hand. As for the footstool, she would not even allow it to remain where that same unclean hand had placed it. She kicked it aside with her foot and drew up her small, round stature in a comprehensive gesture of outraged pride.

Diogenes made her a low bow, sweeping the floor with his plumed hat. The serving-wench had much ado to keep a serious countenance, so comical did the mevrour look in her wrath and so mirth-provoking the gentleman with his graceful airs and unruffled temper. Anon laughter tickled her so that she had to run quickly out of the room, in order to indulge in a fit of uncontrolled mirth away from the reproving glances of mevrour.

It was the pleasant sound of that merry laughter outside the door that caused the jongejuffrouw to come to herself and to open wide, wondering eyes. She looked around her vaguely puzzled, taking in the details of the cozy room, the crackling fire, the polished table, the inviting bed that exhaled an odor of dried rosemary.

Then her glance fell on Diogenes, who was standing hat in hand in the center of the room, with the light from the blazing logs playing upon his smiling face and on the immaculate whiteness of his collar.

She frowned. And he who stood there, carelessly expectant, could not help wondering whether with that swift contemptuous glance which she threw on him, she had already recognized him.

"Mejuffrouw," he said, thus checking with a loud word the angry exclamation which hovered on her lips, "if everything here is not entirely in accordance with your desires, I pray you but to command and it shall be remedied if human agency can but contrive to do so.

"As for me, I am entirely at your service—your *majordomo*, your servant, your outrider, anything you like to name me. Send but for your servant if you have need of aught. Supper will be brought up to you immediately, and in the meanwhile I beg leave to free you from my unwelcome company."

Already there was a goodly clatter of

platters and of crockery outside. As the wench reëntered anon, bearing a huge tray on which were set out several toothsome things, Diogenes contrived to make his exit without encountering further fusillades of angry glances.

He joined his friends in the tap room downstairs, and as he was young, vigorous and hungry, he set to with them and ate a hearty supper. But he spoke very little, and the rough jests of his brother philosophers met with but little response from him.

CHAPTER XVII

AN UNDERSTANDING

AT ONE hour after midnight the summons came.

Maria, majestic and unbending, sailed into the tap room where the three philosophers were stretched out full length upon a couple of benches fast asleep. At the sound of her footsteps Diogenes struggled to wakefulness.

"The noble Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn desires your presence," she said, addressing the Laughing Cavalier with lofty dignity.

At once he arose to his feet and followed Maria up the stairs and into the lady's room. From this room an inner door gave on another smaller alcove-like chamber, wherein a bed had been prepared for Maria.

Gilda somewhat curtly ordered her to retire.

"I will call you, Maria," she said, "when I have need of you."

Diogenes with elaborate courtesy threw open the inner door and stood beside it, plumed hat in hand while the mevrour sailed past him with arms folded across her ample bosom and one of those dignified glances in her round eyes that should have annihilated this impious malapert whose face, despite its airs of deference, was wreathed in an obviously ironical smile.

It was only when the heavy oaken door had fallen to behind her duenna that Gilda with an imperious little gesture called Diogenes before her.

He advanced hat in hand as was his wont, his magnificent figure very erect, his head with its wealth of untamed curls slightly bent. But he looked on her boldly with those laughter-filled, twinkling eyes of his.

Since he was young, and neither ascetic nor yet a woman-hater, we may take it that

he had some considerable pleasure in the contemplation of the dainty picture which she presented against the background of dull gold velvet, her small head propped against the cushions, the feathery curls escaping from under her coif and casting pearly, transparent shadows upon the ivory whiteness of her brow.

Her two hands were resting each on an arm of the chair, and looked more delicate than ever now in the soft light of the tallow candles that burned feebly in the pewter candelabra upon the table.

Diogenes for the moment envied his friend, Frans Hals, for the power which the painter of pictures has of placing so dainty an image on record for all times. His look of bold admiration, however, caused Gilda's glance to harden, and she drew herself up in her chair in an attitude more indicative of her rank and station and of her consciousness of his inferiority. But not with a single look or smile did she betray whether she had recognized him or not.

"Your name?" she asked curtly.

His smile broadened—self-deprecatingly this time.

"They call me Diogenes," he replied.

"A strange name," she commented, "but 'tis of no consequence."

"Of none whatever," he rejoined. "I had not ventured to pronounce it, only that you deigned to ask."

Again she frowned. The tone of gentle mockery had struck unpleasantly on her ear, and she did not like that look of self-satisfied independence which sat on him as if to the manner born, when he was only an abject menial, paid to do dirty work for his betters.

"I have sent for you, sir," she resumed after a slight pause, "because I wished to demand of you an explanation of your infamous conduct. Roguery and vagabondage are severely punished by our laws, and you have brought your neck uncommonly near the gallows by your act of highway robbery.

"Do you hear me?" she asked more peremptorily, seeing that he made no attempt at a reply.

"I hear you, mejuffrouw."

"And what is your explanation?"

"That is my trouble, mejuffrouw. I have none to offer."

"Do you refuse then to tell me what your

purpose is in thus defying the laws of the land and risking the gallows by laying hands upon me and upon my waiting-woman in the open streets, and by taking me away by brute force from my home?"

"My purpose, mejuffrouw, is to convey you safely as far as Rotterdam, where I will hand you over into the worthy keeping of a gentleman who will relieve me of further responsibility with regard to your precious person."

"In Rotterdam?" she exclaimed. "What should I do in Rotterdam?"

"Nothing, I imagine," replied Diogenes dryly, "for you would not remain there longer than is necessary. I am the bearer of written orders to that same gentleman in Rotterdam that he shall himself conduct you under suitable escort—of which I, no doubt, will still form an integral part—to his private residence, which I am told is situate outside the city and on the road to Delft."



"A LIKELY story indeed!" she rejoined vehemently. "I'll not believe it! Common theft and robbery are your purpose, nothing less, else you had not stolen my purse from me nor the jewels which I wore."

"I had to take your purse and your jewels from you, mejuffrouw," he said with perfect equanimity, "else you might have used them for the purpose of slipping through my fingers." Wench at wayside inns are easily amenable to bribes. So are the male servants at city hostels.

"But your purse and the trinkets which you wore are safely stowed away in my wallet. I shall have the honor of returning them to you when we arrive in Rotterdam."

"Of returning them to me!" she said, with a contemptuous laugh. "Do knaves like you ever return stolen property?"

"Seldom, I admit," he replied, still with unruffled good humor. "Nevertheless, an exception hath often proved a rule. Your purse and trinkets are here," he added.

And from his wallet he took out a small leather purse and some loose jewelry which he showed to her.

"And," he added ere he once more replaced them in his wallet, "I will guard them most carefully until I can return them to you in Rotterdam, after which time 'twill be some one else's business to see that you do not slip through his fingers."

"And you expect me to believe such a senseless tale!" she rejoined contemptuously.

"There are many things in this world and the next, *mejuffrouw*," he said lightly, "that are true, though some of us believe them not."

"Nay, but this I do believe on the evidence of mine own eyes—that you stole my money and my jewels and have no intention of returning them to me."

"Your opinion of me, *mejuffrouw*, is already so low that it matters little, surely, if you think me a common thief as well."

"My opinion of you, sir, is based upon your actions."

"And these, I own, stand in formidable array against me."

She bit her lip in vexation and her slender fingers began to beat a tattoo on the arm of her chair. This man's placidity and inveterate good humor were getting on her nerves. It is hard when one means to wound, to find the surest arrows falling wide of the mark. But now she waited for a moment or two lest her irritation betray itself in the quiver of her voice; and it was only when she felt quite sure that it would sound as trenchant and hard as she intended that it should that she said abruptly—

"Who is paying you, sir, for this infamy?"

"One apparently who can afford the luxury," he replied airily.

"You will not tell me?"

"Do you think, *mejuffrouw*, that I could?"

"I may guess."

"It should not be difficult," he assented.

"And you, sir," she continued more vehemently, "are one of the many tools which the Lord of Stoutenburg doth use to gain his own political ends."

"The Lord of Stoutenburg?"

It was impossible for Gilda Beresteyn to gage exactly whether the astonishment expressed in that young villain's exclamation was real or feigned. Certainly his mobile face was a picture of puzzlement, but this may have been caused only by his wondering how she could so easily have guessed the name of his employer. For as to this she was never for a moment in doubt.

It was easy enough for her to piece together the series of events which had followed her parting from her brother at the cathedral door. Stoutenburg, burning with anxiety and glowing with his ardent desire for vengeance against the Stadtholder, had

feared that Gilda would betray the secret which she held, and he had paid this knave to take her out of the way.

Stoutenburg and his gang! It could be no one else! She dared not think that her own brother would have a share in so dastardly an outrage. It was Stoutenburg of course! And this smiling knave knew it well! Aye, even though he murmured again and this time to the accompaniment of smothered oaths:

"Stoutenburg? *Bedonderd!*"

"Aye!" she said loftily. "You see that I am not deceived. 'Tis the Lord of Stoutenburg who gave you money to play this trick on me. He paid you! Paid you, I say, and you, a man who should be fighting for your country, were over-ready to make war upon a woman. Shame on you! Shame, I say! 'Tis a deed that should cause you to blush, if indeed you have a spark of honesty in you, which of a truth I do gravely doubt."

She had worked herself up into an outburst of indignation and flung insult upon insult on him in the vague hope of waking some slumbering remnant of shame in his heart, and mayhap ruffling that imperturbable air of contentment of his, and that impudent look of swagger most unbecoming in a menial.



BUT by naming Stoutenburg she had certainly brought to light many things which Diogenes had only vaguely suspected. His mind, keen and shrewd despite his follies, recalled his interview with Nicolaes Beresteyn in the studio of Frans Hals. All the details of that interview seemed suddenly to have gained significance as well as lucidity. The lofty talk anent the future of Holland and the welfare of the faith was easily understandable in this new light which the name of Stoutenburg had cast upon it.

Stoutenburg and the welfare of Holland! A secret the possession of which meant death to six selfless patriots, or the forfeiture mayhap of her good name and her honor to this defenseless girl! Stoutenburg at the bottom of it all!

Diogenes could have laughed aloud with triumph, so clear now was the whole scheme to him.

There was no one living who did not think that at some time or other Stoutenburg meant to come back and make yet one more attempt to wipe a bloodstain from the

annals of his country by one equally foul.

One of Barneveldt's sons had already paid for such an attempt with his life. The other had escaped only in order to intrigue again, to plot again, and again to fail. And this poor girl had by a fortuitous mishap overheard the discussion of the guilty secret. Stoutenburg had come back and meant to kill the Stadtholder. Nicolaes Beresteyn was his accomplice, and had callously sacrificed his innocent sister to the success of his friend's schemes.

If out of this network of intrigues a sensible philosopher did not succeed in consolidating his independence with the aid of a substantial fortune, then he was neither so keen nor so daring as his friends and he himself supposed!

And Gilda wondered what went on in his mind, for those twinkling eyes of his never betrayed any deeper thought. But she noticed with great mortification that the insults which she had heaped upon him so freely had not shamed him at all, for the good-humored smile was not effaced from his lips. Rather did the shapely hand wander up to the mustache in order to give it, she thought, a more provoking curl.

"I still await your answer," she said haughtily, seeing that his prolonged silence savored of impertinence.

"I humbly crave your pardon, mejuffrouw," he said pleasantly. "I was absorbed in wonderment."

"You marveled, sir, how easily I saw behind your schemes, and saw the hand which drove you in harness?"

"Your pardon, mejuffrouw; I was pondering on your own words. You deigned to say just now that I—a man—should be fighting for my country——"

"If you were worthy, sir, to be called a man."

"Quite so," he said whimsically. "But even if I did lay claim to the title, mejuffrouw, how could I fight for my country when my country doth not happen to be at war just now?"

"Your country? What, pray, might your country be? Not that this concerns me in the least," she added hastily.

"Of course not," he rejoined blandly.

"What is your country, sir?"

"England."

"I do not like the English."

"Nor do I, mejuffrouw. But I was unfortunately not consulted as to my choice of a

fatherland: nor doth it change the fact that King James of England is at peace just now with all the world."

"So you preferred to earn a dishonest living by abducting innocent women to further the intrigues of your paymaster!"

"It is a harsh exposition," he said blandly, "of an otherwise obvious fact."

"And you are not ashamed?"

"Not more than is necessary for my comfort."

"And can not I move you, sir?" she said with sudden warmth. "Can not an appeal to you from my lips rouse a feeling of manhood within you?"

"My father is a rich man," she continued eagerly. "He hath it in his power to reward those who do him service. He can do so far more effectually than the Lord of Stoutenburg."

"Sir! I would not think of making an appeal to your heart; no doubt long ago you have taught it to remain cold to the prayers of a woman in distress. But surely you will listen to the call of your own self-interest. My father must be nigh heartbroken by now. The hours have sped away and he knows not where to find me."

"No! I have taken very good care of that, mejuffrouw. We are at Leyden now, but we left Haarlem through the Groningen Gate. We traveled north first, then east, then only south. . . . Mynheer Beresteyn would require a divining-rod wherewith to find you now."

It seemed unnecessary cruelty to tell her that, when already despair had seized on her heart, but she would not let this abominable rogue see how deeply she was hurt. She feigned not to have noticed the purport of his words and continued with the same insistent eagerness:

"Torn with anxiety, sir, he will be ready with a rich reward for one who would bring his only daughter safely home to him. I know not what the Lord of Stoutenburg hath promised you for doing his abominable work for him, but this I do assure you; that my father will double and treble whatever sum you choose to name. Take me back to him, sir; now, this night, and tomorrow morning you could count yourself one of the rich men of Haarlem."

But Diogenes, with half-closed eyes and gentle smile, slowly shook his head.

"Were I to present myself before Mynheer

Beresteyn tonight, he would summon the town guard and I should count myself as good as hanged tomorrow."

"Do you measure other men's treachery, then, by your own?"

"I measure other men's wrath by mine, mejuffrouw—and if a rogue had stolen my daughter, I should not rest until I had seen him hanged."

"I pledge you my word——" she began hotly.

"And I mine, mejuffrouw," he broke in a little more firmly than he had spoken hitherto, "that I will place you safely and, I pray God, in good health, into the care of a certain gentleman in Rotterdam. To this is my word of honor pledged, and even such a mean vagabond as I is bound by a given word."

 TO THIS she made no reply. Perhaps she felt that in his last words there lurked a determination which it were useless to combat. Her pride, too, was up in arms. How could she plead further to this rascal who met the most earnest appeal with a pert jest; who mocked at her distress, and was impervious alike to prayers and to insults?

"I see," she said coldly, "that I do but waste my time in calling on your honor to forego this infamous trickery. Where there is no chivalry, there can be neither honor nor pity. I am in your hands, helpless because I am a woman. If it is the will of God that I should so remain, I can not combat brute force with my feeble strength. No doubt He knows best, and also, I believe, doth oft give the devil power to triumph in the sight of men.

"After this night, sir, I will no longer defame my lips by speaking to you. If you have a spark of compassion left in your heart for one who hath never wronged you, I but ask you to relieve me of your presence as much as you can during the weary hours of this miserable journey."

"Have I your leave to go at once?" he asked with unalterable cheerfulness, and made haste to reach the door.

"Only one moment more must I detain you," she rejoined haughtily. "I wish you to understand that from this hour forth until such time as it pleaseth God to free me from this humiliating position, I will follow your commands to the best of my ability, not because I recognize your right to dic-

tate them, but because I am helpless to oppose you.

"If I and my waiting-woman obey your orders meekly, if we rise when so ordered, are ready to start on the way whenever so compelled, get in or out of the vehicle at the first word from you, can we at least rest assured that we shall be spared further outrage?"

"Do you mean, mejuffrouw, that I must no longer attempt to lift you out of a coach or to carry you up to your chamber, even if, as tonight, you are faint and but half-conscious?" he asked with whimsical earnestness.

"I desire, sir, that you and those who help you in this shameful work do in future spare me and my woman the insult of laying hands upon our persons."

He gave a long, low whistle.

"*Dondersteen!*" he exclaimed flippantly. "I had no thought that so much hatred and malice could lurk in the frail body of a woman. . . . 'Tis true," he added with a shrug of the shoulders, "that a rogue such as I must of necessity know very little of the workings of a noble lady's mind."

"Had you known aught of mine, sir," she retorted coldly, "you would have understood that it is neither hatred nor malice which I feel for you and for those who are paying you to do this infamy. What I feel is only contempt."

"Is that all?" he queried blandly. "Ah, well, mejouffrouw, then am I all the more indebted to you for the great honor which you have done me this hour past."

"Honor? I do not understand. It was not in my mind to do you honor."

"I am sure not. You did it quite unconsciously and the honor was enhanced thereby. You honored me, mejuffrouw," he said, while a tone of earnestness crept into his merry voice, "by trusting me—the common thief, the cut-throat, the hired brigand—alone in your presence for a whole hour, while the entire household here was abed and your duenna snoring contentedly in a room with locked door close by.

"During that hour your tongue did not spare my temper for one moment. For this recognition of manly forbearance and chivalry—even though you choose to deny their existence—do I humbly thank you. Despite—or perhaps because of—your harsh estimate of me you made me feel tonight almost a gentleman."

With his habitual elegance of gesture he

swept her a deep bow; then, without another word or look, and with firm, ringing steps, he walked quickly out of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE START

ONCE the door safely closed behind him, he heaved a deep sigh as if of intense relief and passed his hand quickly across his brow.

"By St. Bavon," he murmured, "my friend Diogenes, thou hast had to face unpleasantness before now. Those harquebusiers at Wiesloch were difficult to withstand; those murderous blackguards in the forests of Prague nearly had thy skin; but *verdommt* be thou if thou hast had to hold thy temper in bounds like this before. *Dondersteen!* How I could have crushed that sharp-tongued young vixen till she cried for mercy. . . . Or silenced those venomous lips with a kiss! . . . I was sore tempted, indeed, to give her real cause for calling me a knave."

In the tap room downstairs he found Pythagoras and Socrates curled up on the floor in front of the hearth. They were fast asleep, and Diogenes did not attempt to waken them. He had given them their orders for the next day earlier in the evening, and with the promise of five hundred golden guilders to be won by implicit obedience the two worthies were not like to disobey.

He himself had his promise to his friend Hals to redeem—the flight along the frozen waterways back to Haarlem, a few hours spent in the studio in the *Peeuselaarsteeg*, then the return flight to rejoin his compeers and the *jongeuffrouw* at the little hamlet of Houdekeerk off the mainroad; thither he had ordered them to proceed in the early morning, there to lie concealed until his return. Houdekeerk lay to the east of Leyden and so well off the beaten track that the little party would be safely hidden there during the day. He intended to be with them again well before midnight of the next day.

For the nonce he collected a few necessary provisions which he had ordered to be ready for him—a half bottle of wine, some meat and bread. Then he made his way out of the little hostelry and across the courtyard to the stables where the horses

had been put up. The night was singularly clear. The waning moon, after it had emerged from a bank of low-lying clouds, lit up the surrounding landscape with a radiance that was intensely blue.

Groping his way about in the stables, Diogenes found his saddle, which he himself had lifted off his horse, and from the holster he drew a pair of skates. With these hanging by their straps upon his arm, he left the building behind him and turned to walk in the direction of the river.

The little city lay quite peaceful and still under the weird brilliancy of the moon, which threw many-hued reflections on the snow-covered surfaces of roofs and tall gables. It was piercingly cold. The silver ribbon of the Rhine wound its graceful curve westward to the North Sea and from beyond its opposite bank a biting wind swept across the dikes and over the flat country around, chasing myriads of crisp snowflakes from their rest and driving them in wanton frolic 'round and 'round into little whirlpools of mist that glistened like the facets of diamonds.

Diogenes had walked briskly along. The skates upon his arm clicked at every one of his movements with a pleasing metallic sound. He chose a convenient spot on the river bank to squat upon the ground, and fastened on his skates.

After which he arose and for a moment stood looking straight out northward before him. But a few leagues—half a dozen at most—lay between him and Haarlem. The Rhine, as well as the innumerable small *polders* and lakes, had left after the Autumn floods their usual trail of narrow waterways behind them which, frozen over now, joining, intersecting and rejoining again, formed a perfect, uninterrupted road thence to the northern cities.

It had been along these frozen ways that the daring and patriotic citizens of Leyden had half a century ago kept up communication with the outer world during the memorable siege which had lasted throughout the Winter, and it was by their help that they were able to defy the mighty investing Spanish army by getting provisions into the beleaguered city.

A young adventurer stood here now, calmly measuring in his mind the distance which he would have to traverse in the teeth of a piercing gale and at dead of night in order to satisfy the ambition of a friend.

It was not the first time in his hazardous career that he had undertaken such a journey. He was accustomed to take all risks in life with indifference and good humor. The only thing that mattered was the ultimate end; an exciting experience to go through, a goodly competence to earn, a promise to fulfil.

Up above, the waning moon seemed to smile upon his enterprise. She lay radiant and serene on her star-studded canopy of mysterious, ethereal indigo. Diogenes looked back on the little hostelry, which lay some little distance up the street at right angles to the river bank. Was it his fancy or one of those many mysterious reflections thrown by the moon? But it certainly seemed to him as if a light still burned in one of the upper windows.

The unpleasant interview with the *jongefrouw* had evidently not weighed down his spirits, for to that distant light he now sent a loud and merry farewell.

Then, deliberately facing the bitter blast, he struck out boldly along the ice and started on his way.

CHAPTER XIX

BACK AGAIN IN HAARLEM

HIGH-HO, for that run along the ice—a matter of half a dozen leagues or so—at dead of night with a keen northeasterly wind whipping up the blood, and motion—smooth, gliding motion—to cause it to glow in every vein!

Heigh-ho, for the joy of living, for the joy in the white, ice-covered world, the joy in the night, and in the moon, and in those distant lights of Leyden which gradually recede and diminish—tiny atoms now in the infinite and mysterious distance!

On, on! Silently and swiftly, in the stillness of the night, the cruel skates make deep gashes on the smooth skin of the ice—long even strokes now, for the Meer is smooth and straight, and the moon—kind moon!—marks an even, silvery track, where the capricious wind has swept it free of snow.

Then the thousand sounds that rise all around; the thousand sounds, which all united make one vast, comprehensive silence—the sougling of the wind in the bare poplar trees, the rattle of tiny dead twigs and moaning of the branches; from far away

the dull and ceaseless rumble which speaks of a restless sea, and now and again the loud and melancholy boom of the ice, yielding to the restless movement of water beneath!

The sounds which make up silence—silence and loneliness, Nature's perfect repose under its downy blanket of snow, the vast embrace of the night stretching out into infinity in monotonous flatnesses far away, to the mysterious mists which lie beyond the horizon!

Oh, for the joy of it all! The beauty of the night, the wind and the frost! And the many landmarks which loom out of the darkness one by one to guide that flying figure on its way—the square tower of old Katwyk-Binnen church, the group of pollard willows at the corner of Veenenburg Polder, the derelict boats on the bank of the Haarlemer Meer, and always from the left that pungent smell of the sea, the brine and the peculiar odor which emanates from the dikes close by, from the wet clay and rotting branches of willows that protect man against the encroachment of the ocean!

On, on, thou sole inhabitant of this kingdom of the night! Fly on thy wings of metal, hour after hour—midnight—one—two—three—where are the hours now? There are no hours in the kingdom of the night!

Less than a league to cover now! And when at last the cathedral tower boomed out the hour of seven he was squatting on the bank of the Oude Gracht in Haarlem and with numbed fingers and many an oath was struggling with the straps of his skates.



A QUARTER of an hour later he was installed in his friend's studio in front of a comfortable fire and with a mug of hot ale in front of him.

"I didn't think that you really meant to come," Frans Hals had said when he admitted the Laughing Cavalier into his house in response to a peremptory ring.

"I mean to have some breakfast now at any rate, my friend," was the tired wayfarer's only comment.

The artist was too excited and too eager to get to work to question his sitter further. I doubt if in Diogenes's face or in his whole person there were many visible traces of the fatigues of the night.

"What news in Haarlem?" he asked after the first draft of hot ale had put fresh life into his veins.

"Why? Where have you been that you've not heard?" queried Hals indifferently.

"Away on urgent business affairs," replied the other lightly. "And what is the news?"

"That the daughter of Cornelius Beresteyn, the rich grain merchant and deputy burgomaster of this city, was abducted last night by brigands and hath not to my knowledge been found yet."

Diogenes gave a long low whistle of well feigned astonishment.

"The fact doth not speak much for the guardians of the city," he remarked dryly.

"The outrage was very cleverly carried out, so I've heard said; and it was not until close upon midnight that the scouts sent by Mynheer Beresteyn in every direction came back with the report that the brigands left the city by the Groningen Gate and were no doubt well on their way north by then."

"And what was done after that?"

"I have not heard yet," replied Hals. "It is still early. When the serving-woman comes she will tell us the latest news. I am afraid I can't get to work until the light improves. Are you hungry? Shall I get you something more solid to eat?"

"Well, old friend," rejoined the other gaily, "since you are so hospitable——"

By eight o'clock he was once more ensconced on the sitter's platform, dressed in the gorgeous doublet and sash, hat on head and hand on hip, smiling at his friend's delight and eagerness in his work.

Hals in the meanwhile had heard further news of the great event, which apparently was already the talk of Haarlem even at this early hour of the day.

"There seems no doubt," he said, "that the outrage is the work of those *vervloekte* Sea Wolves. They have carried Gilda Beresteyn away in the hope of extorting a huge ransom out of her father."

"I hope," said Diogenes unctuously, "that he can afford to pay it."

"He is passing rich," replied the artist with a sigh. "A great patron of the arts. . . . It was his son you saw here yesterday, and the portrait which I then showed you was that of the unfortunate young lady who has been so cruelly abducted."

"Indeed!" remarked Diogenes, ostentatiously smothering a yawn as if the matter was not quite so interesting to him, a

stranger to Haarlem, as it was to his friend.

"The whole city is in a tumult," continued Hals, who was busily working on his picture all the while that he talked, "and Mynheer Beresteyn and his son Nicolaes are raising a private company of *Waardegelders* to pursue the brigands. One guilder a day do they offer to these volunteers, and Nicolaes Beresteyn will himself command the expedition."

"Against the Sea Wolves?" queried the other blandly.

"In person. Think on it, man! The girl is his own sister."

"It is unthinkable," agreed Diogenes solemnly.

All of which was, of course, vastly interesting to him, since what he heard today would be a splendid guidance for him as to his future progress southward to Rotterdam. Nicolaes Beresteyn leading an expedition of raw recruits in the pursuit of his sister was a subject humorous enough to delight the young adventurer's sense of fun. Moreover, it was passing lucky that suspicion had at once fallen on the Sea Wolves—a notorious band of ocean pirates whose acts of pillage and abduction had long since aroused the ire of all northern cities that suffered from their impudent depredations.

Diogenes congratulated himself on the happy inspiration which had caused him to go out of Haarlem by its north gate and to have progressed toward Groningen for a quarter of an hour or so, leaving traces behind him which Nicolaes Beresteyn would no doubt know how to interpret in favor of the "Sea-Wolves" theory. He could also afford to think with equanimity now of Pythagoras and Socrates in charge of the *jongejuffrouw*, lying comfortably concealed at a wayside inn, situated fully thirteen leagues to the south of the nearest inland lair which was known to be the halting-place of the notorious sea robbers.

Indeed, his act of friendship in devoting his day to the interests of Frans Hals had already obtained its reward, for he had gathered valuable information and his journey to Rotterdam would in consequence be vastly more easy to plan.

No wonder that Frans Hals as he worked on the picture felt he had never had such a sitter before. The thoughts within, redolent of fun, of amusement at the situation, of eagerness for the continuation of the

adventure, seemed to bubble and to sparkle out of the eyes. The lines of quiet humor, of gentle irony, appeared ever mobile, ever quivering around the mouth.

For many hours that day hardly a word passed between the two men, while the masterpiece was in progress which was destined to astonish and delight the whole world for centuries to come. They paused hardly a quarter of an hour during the day to snatch a morsel of food. Hals, imbued with the spirit of genius, begrudged every minute not spent in work; and Diogenes, having given his time to his friend, was prepared that the gift should be a full measure.

Only at four o'clock, when daylight faded and the twilight began to merge the gorgeous figure of the sitter into one dull, gray harmony, did the artist at last throw down brushes and palette with a sigh of infinite satisfaction.

"It is good," he said, as with eyes half closed he took a final survey of his sitter and compared the living model with his own immortal work.

"Have you had enough of me?" asked Diogenes.

"No. Not half enough. I would like to make a fresh start on a new portrait of you at once. I would try one of those effects of light of which Rembrandt thinks that he hath the monopoly, but which I would show him how to treat without so much artificiality."

He continued talking of technicalities, rambling on in his usual fretful, impatient way, while Diogenes stretched out his cramped limbs and rubbed his tired eyes.

"Can I undress now?"

"Yes. The light has quite gone," said the artist with a sigh.



DIOGENES stood for a long time in contemplation of the masterpiece, even as the shadows of evening crept slowly into every corner of the studio and cast their gloom over the gorgeous canvas in its magnificent scheme of color. "Am I really as good-looking as that?" he asked, with one of his most winning laughs.

"Good-looking? I don't know," replied Hals. "You are the best sitter I have ever had. Today has been one of perfect, unalloyed enjoyment to me."

All his vulgar, mean little ways had vanished; his obsequiousness, that shifty look

of indecision in the eyes which proclaimed a growing vice. His entire face flowed with the enthusiasm of a creator who has had to strain every nerve to accomplish his work, but having accomplished it is entirely satisfied with it. He could not tear himself away from the picture, but stood looking on it long after the gloom had obliterated all but its most striking lights.

Then only did he realize that he was both hungry and weary.

"Will you come with me to 'The Lame Cow'?" he asked his friend. "We can eat and drink there and hear all the latest news. I want to see Cornelius Beresteyn if I can; he must be deeply stricken with grief and will have need of the sympathy of all his well-wishers. What say you? Shall we get supper at 'The Lame Cow'?"

To which proposition Diogenes readily agreed. It pleased his spirit of adventure to risk a chance encounter in the popular tavern with Nicolaes Beresteyn or the Lord of Stoutenburg, both of whom must think him at this moment several leagues away in the direction of Rotterdam.

Neither of these gentlemen would venture to question him in a public place; moreover, it had been agreed from the first that an absolutely free hand was to be given him with regard to his plans for conducting the *jongejuffrouw* to her ultimate destination. Altogether the afternoon and evening promised to be more amusing than Diogenes had anticipated.

CHAPTER XX

A GRIEF-STRICKEN FATHER

FRANS HALS had not been guilty of exaggeration when he said that the whole city was in a turmoil about the abduction of Gilda Beresteyn by that impudent gang of ocean robbers who called themselves the Sea Wolves.

On this subject there were no two opinions. The Sea Wolves had done this deed, as they had done others of a like nature before. The abduction of children of rich parents was one of their most frequent crimes; many a wealthy burgher had had to pay away half his fortune in ransom.

The fact that a covered sledge, escorted by three riders who were swathed in heavy mantles, had been seen going out of the city by the northern gate at seven o'clock the

evening before was held to be sufficient proof that the unfortunate jongejuffrouw was being conveyed straightway to the coast where the pirates had their own lairs and defied every effort which had hitherto been made for their capture.

On this, the second day of January, 1624—rather less than twenty-four hours after the abduction of Gilda Beresteyn—the *tap-perij* of "The Lame Cow" presented an appearance which was almost as animated as that which had graced it on New Year's night. Every one who took an interest in the terrible event went to "The Lame Cow" in the hope of finding another better informed than himself.

Men and women sat around the tables or leaned against the bars discussing the situation. Every one, of course, had a theory to put forward or a suggestion to offer.

"'Tis time the old law for the raising of a corps of *Waardegelders* by the city were put into force once more," said Mynheer van der Meer, the Burgomaster, whose words carried weight. "What can a city do for the preservation of law and order if it has not the power to levy its own guard?"

"My opinion is," said Mynheer van Zeller, who was treasurer of the Oudemannenhuis and a personage of vast importance, "that we in this city ought to close our gates against all this foreign rabble who infest us with their noise and their loose ways. Had there not been such a crowd of them here for the New Year, you may depend on it that Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn would not have been the victim of this outrage."

Others on the other hand thought that the foreign mercenaries now within the city could be utilized for the purpose of an expedition against the Sea Wolves.

"They are very daring and capable fighters," suggested Mynheer van Beerenbrock, a meek, timid, but vastly corpulent gentleman of great consideration on the Town Council, "and more able to grapple with desperate brigands than were a levy of raw recruits from among our young townsmen."

"Set a rogue to fight a rogue, say I," assented another pompous burgher.

Cornelius Beresteyn sat at a table with his son and surrounded by his most influential friends. Those who knew him well declared that he had aged ten years in the past few hours. His devotion to his daughter was well known: it was pitiable to see

the furrows in his cheeks wet with continuously falling tears.

He sat huddled up within himself, his elbows resting on the table, his head often buried in his hands when emotion mastered him and he felt unable to restrain his tears. He looked like a man absolutely dazed with the immensity of his grief, as if some one had dealt him a violent blow on the head which had half addled his brain.

Throughout the day his house had been positively invaded by the frequent callers who, under a desire to express their sympathy, merely hid their eagerness to learn fresh details of the outrage. Cornelius Beresteyn, harassed by this well meaning and very noisy crowd, and feeling numb in mind and weary in body, had been too feeble to withstand the urgent entreaties of his friends who had insisted on dragging him to "The Lame Cow" where the whole situation—which had become of almost national importance—could be fully discussed.

"You want to get your daughter back, do you not, old friend?" Mynheer van der Meer, the Burgomaster, had urged.

"Of course," assented Beresteyn feebly.

"And you want to get her back as quickly as possible," added the pompous treasurer of the Oudemannenhuis.

"As quickly as possible," reiterated Beresteyn vaguely.

"Very well then," concluded the Burgomaster, in tones of triumph which suggested that he had gained a great victory over the obstinate will of his friend. "What you must do, my good Beresteyn, is to attend an informal council which I have convened for this afternoon at 'The Lame Cow,' whereat we will listen to all the propositions put forward by our fellow townsmen for the speedy capture of those *vervloekte* brigands and the liberation of your beloved daughter."

 IN THE meantime an untoward accident had momentarily arrested the progress of the original band of volunteers who under the leadership of Nicolaes Beresteyn had started quite early in the morning on the Groningen route in pursuit of the Sea Wolves. Nicolaes, namely, on remounting his horse after a brief halt at Bloemendal, had slipped on the snow-covered ground. His horse jumped aside and reared, and in so doing seriously wrenched Nicolaes's right arm, almost dis-

locating his shoulder, and causing him thereby such excruciating pain that he nearly fainted on the spot.

Further progress on horseback became an impossibility for him, and two of the volunteers had much difficulty in conveying him back to Haarlem, where, however, he displayed the utmost fortitude by refusing to waste his time in being examined and tended by the bonesetter, declaring that since he could not take an active part in the campaign against the *vervloekte* malefactors he would give every moment of his time and every faculty he possessed for the organization of an effective corps of soldiery capable of undertaking a successful punitive expedition.

He joined his father in the tap room of "The Lame Cow"; and though he was obviously in great pain with his arm and shoulder, which he had hastily and perfunctorily tied up with his sash, he was untiring in his suggestions, his advice, his offers of money and of well considered plans.

Unbeknown to any one save to him, the Lord of Stoutenburg sat in a dark recess of the *tapperij*, deeply interested in all that was going on. He knew, of course, every detail of the plot which Nicolaes Beresteyn had hatched at his instigation; and, hidden as he was in his obscure corner, it pleased his masterful mind to think that the tangled skein of this affair which these pompous burghers were trying to unravel had been originally snarled by himself.

He listened contemptuously and in silence to the wild and often senseless talk which went on around him; but when he caught sight of Diogenes swaggering into the room in the wake of the painter Frans Hals he very nearly betrayed himself.

Nicolaes Beresteyn, too, was dumfounded. For the moment he literally gasped with astonishment and was quite thankful that his supposedly dislocated shoulder furnished a good pretext for the string of oaths which he uttered. But Diogenes, sublimely indifferent to the astonishment of his patron, took a seat beside his friend at one of the vacant tables and ordered a substantial supper with a bottle of very choice wine wherewith to wash it down, all of which he evidently meant to pay for with Nicolaes's money. The latter could do nothing but sit by in grim silence while the man whom he had paid to do him service ate and drank heartily, cracked jokes and

behaved for all the world as if he were a burgher of leisure plentifully supplied with money.

Time was going on. The subject of the expedition against the Sea Wolves had been fully discussed and certain resolutions arrived at, which only lacked the assent of the Burgomaster sitting in council and of Cornelius Beresteyn—the party chiefly interested in the affair—in order to take effect on the morrow. Gradually the tap room became less and less full. One by one the eager and inquisitive townsfolk departed in order to impart what news they had gleaned to their expectant families at home.

Nicolaes Beresteyn, inwardly fuming and fretting with rage, had been quite unable to stay on quietly while Diogenes sat not twenty paces away from him, wasting his patron's time and money. Diogenes was apparently in the best of humors, for his infectious laugh rang from end to end of the raftered room. He had soon assembled a small crowd of boon companions around his table. These he treated to merry jests as well as to Mynheer Beek's most excellent wine.

But when he leaned forward, bumper in hand, and actually had the audacity loudly to pledge the noble Beresteyn family and to wish the heroic Nicolaes speedy mending of his broken bones, the latter arose with a muttered curse and having taken a curt farewell of his friends strode glowering out of the room.

The Lord of Stoutenburg, as unobtrusive and silent as was his wont, arose quietly a few minutes later and followed in the wake of his friend.

CHAPTER XXI

A DOUBLE PLEDGE

CORNELIUS BERESTEYN had now only a few of his most intimate friends beside him, and when Frans Hals had finished his supper he ventured to approach the rich patron of arts and to present his own most respectful expressions of sympathy.

Softened by grief, the old man was more than usually gracious to the artist.

"'Tis a bitter blow, my good Hals," he said dully.

"Please God those devils have only an

eye on your money, mynheer," said the artist consolingly. "They will look on the jongejuffrouw as a valuable hostage and treat her with the utmost deference in the hopes of getting a heavy ransom from you."

"May you be speaking truly!" sighed Cornelius, with a disconsolate shake of the head. "But think what she must be suffering now, while she is uncertain of her own fate, poor child!"

"Alas!"

"This delay is killing me, Hals," continued the old man, who in the midst of his more pompous friends seemed instinctively drawn to the simple nature of this humble painter of pictures. "The Burgomaster means well, but his methods are slow and ponderous. All my servants and dependents have joined the first expedition toward Groningen, but God knows how they will get on, now that Nicolaes no longer leads them. They have had no training in such matters and will hardly know how to proceed."

"You really want some one who is daring and capable, mynheer: some one who will be as wary as those *vervolckte* Sea Wolves and beat them at their own game. 'Tis not so much the numbers that you want as the one brain to direct and to act."

"True! True, my good Hals! But our best men are all at the war fighting for our religious and political liberties, while we, the older citizens of our beloved country, with our wives and our daughters, are left a prey to the tyranny of malefactors and of pirates.

"The Burgomaster hopes to raise an efficient corps of volunteers by tomorrow, but I doubt me if he will succeed. I have sent to Amsterdam for help. I have spared no money to obtain assistance. But I am an old man myself, and my son, alas, has been rendered helpless at the outset through no fault of his own."

"But surely there are young men left in Haarlem whom wanton mischief such as this would cause to boil with indignation!"

"There are few young men left in Haarlem, my friend," rejoined Beresteyn sadly. "The Stadtholder hath claimed the best of them. Those who are left behind are too much engrossed in their own affairs to care greatly about the grief of an old man, or a wrong done to an innocent girl."

"I'll not believe it," said Hals hotly.

"Alas! 'Tis only too true! Men nowa-

days—those at any rate who are left in our cities—no longer possess that spirit of chivalry or of adventure which caused our forebears to give their life's blood for justice and for liberty."

"You wrong them, mynheer," protested the artist.

"I think not. Think on it, Hals. You know Haarlem well; you know most people who live in the city. Can you name me one man who would stand up before me to-day and say boldly:

"'Mynheer, you have lost your daughter; evil-doers have taken her from her home. Here am I ready to do you service, and I swear that I will bring your daughter back to you!'"

"So would our fathers have spoken, my good Hals, before commerce and prosperity had dulled the edge of reckless gallantry. By Heaven, they were fine men in those days! We are mere pompous, obese, self-satisfied shopkeepers now."

There was a great deal of bitter truth in what Cornelius Beresteyn had said. Hals, the artist, who had listened to the complacent talk that had filled this room a while ago, who knew of the commercial transactions that nowadays went by the name of art patronage—he knew that the old man was not far wrong in his estimate of his fellow countrymen in these recent prosperous times. It was the impulsive, artistic nature in him which caused him to see what he merely imagined—chivalry, romance, primeval notions of bravery and of honor.



HE LOOKED around the room, now almost deserted, somewhat at a loss for words that would soothe Beresteyn's bitter spirit of resentment. Casually his glance fell on the broad figure of his friend Diogenes, who, leaning back in his chair, his plumed hat tilted rakishly across his brow, had listened to the conversation between the two men with an expression of infinite amusement literally dancing in his eyes. And it was that same artistic, impulsive nature which caused Frans Hals then to exclaim suddenly:

"Well, mynheer! Since you call upon me and on my knowledge of this city, I can give you answer forthwith. Yes! I do know a man, now in Haarlem, who hath no thought of commerce or affairs, who possesses that spirit of chivalry which you say is dead among the men of Holland. He

would stand up boldly before you, hat in hand, and say to you—

"Mynheer, I am ready to do you service, and I swear that I will bring your daughter back to you, safe and in good health!"

"I know such a man, mynheer!"

"Bah! You talk at random, my good Hals!" said Beresteyn, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"May I not present him to you, mynheer?"

"Present him? Whom? What nonsense is this?" asked the old man, more dazed and bewildered than before by the artist's voluble talk. "Whom do you wish to present to me?"

"The man who I firmly believe would, out of pure chivalry and the sheer love of adventure, do more toward bringing the *jongejuffrouw* speedily back to you than all the Burgomaster's levies of guards and punitive expeditions."

"You don't mean that, Hals? 'Twere a cruel jest to raise without due cause the hopes of a grief-stricken old man."

"'Tis no jest, mynheer!" said the artist. "There sits the man!"

And with a theatrical gesture—for Mynheer Hals had drunk some very good wine after having worked at high pressure all day, and his excitement had gained the better of him—he pointed to Diogenes, who had heard every word spoken by his friend and who at his *dénouement* burst into a long, delighted, ringing laugh.

"Ye gods!" he exclaimed. "Your Olympian sense of humor is even greater than your might!"

At an urgent appeal from Hals he arose and, hat in hand, did indeed approach Mynheer Beresteyn, looking every inch of him a perfect embodiment of that spirit of adventure which was threatening to be wafted away from these too prosperous shores. His tall figure seemed to be of heroic proportions in this low room, in marked contrast with the small, somewhat obese burghers who still sat close to Cornelius, having listened in silence to the latter's colloquy with the artist. His bright eyes twinkled, his mustache bristled, his lips quivered with the enjoyment of the situation. The grace and elegance of his movements, born of conscious strength, added dignity to his whole personality.

"My friend hath name Diogenes," said

Frans Hals, whose romantic disposition reveled in this presentation, "but there's little of the philosopher about him. He is a man of action, an invincible swordsman, a——"

"*Dondersteen*, my good Hals!" ejaculated Diogenes gaily. "You'll shame me before these gentlemen."

"There's naught to be ashamed of, sir, in the eulogy of a friend," said Cornelius Beresteyn with quiet dignity, "and 'tis a pleasure to an old man like me to look on one so well favored as yourself. Ah, sir! 'Tis but sorrow that I shall know in future. . . . My daughter—— You have heard?"

"I know the trouble that weighs on your soul, mynheer," replied Diogenes simply.

"You have heard, then, what your friend says of you?" continued the old man, whose tear-dimmed eyes gleamed with the newborn flicker of hope. "Our good Hals is enthusiastic, romantic. . . . Mayhap he hath exaggerated. . . . Hath, in fact, been mistaken. . . ."

It was pathetic to see the unfortunate father so obviously hovering 'twixt hope and fear. His hands trembled. There was an appeal in his broken voice, an appeal that he should not be deceived, that he should not be thrown back from the giddy heights of hope to the former deep abyss of despair.

"My daughter, sir," he murmured feebly, "she is all the world to me. . . . Her mother died when she was a baby. . . . She is all the world to me. . . . They have taken her from me. . . . She is so young, sir. . . . So beautiful. . . . She is all the world to me. . . . I would give half my fortune to have her back safely in my arms. . . ."

There was silence in the quaint Old-World place after that—silence broken only by the suppressed sobs of the unfortunate man who had lost his only daughter. The others sat around the table, saying no word, for the pathos evoked by Beresteyn's grief was too great for words. Hals's eyes were fixed on his friend, and he tried in vain to read and understand the enigmatical smile which hovered in every line of that mobile face. The stillness lasted only a few seconds. The next moment Diogenes's ringing voice had once more set every lurking echo dancing from rafter to rafter.

"Mynheer!" he said loudly. "You have lost your daughter. Here am I to do your

service, and I swear that I will bring your daughter safely back to you!"

Frans Hals heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction. Cornelius Beresteyn, overcome by emotion, could at first not utter a word. He put out his hand, groping for that of the man who had fanned the flames of his hope into living activity.



DIOGENES, solemnly trying to look grave and earnest, took the hand thus loyally offered to him. He could have laughed aloud at the absurdity of the present situation. He, pledged by solemn word of honor to convey Jongejuffrouw Beresteyn to Rotterdam and there to place her into the custody of Ben Isaje, merchant of that city; he, carrying inside his doublet an order to Ben Isaje to pay him three thousand guilders; he, bound to pay Pythagoras and Socrates five hundred guilders apiece for their services to him; he was here solemnly pledging himself to restore the jongejuffrouw safely into her father's arms!

The way in which this double promise was to be fulfilled he had, we may take it, at the present moment not fully determined upon. "Half my fortune," the old man had murmured, and an honest Dutch burgher was always as good as his word. It was now Diogenes's business to earn that comfortable half of a rich Haarlem merchant's fortune without breaking the solemn word of honor which he had given to Nicolaes Beresteyn.

Cornelius and his friends, however, gave him no time now for further reflection. All the thinking out would have to be done presently—no doubt on the way between Haarlem and Houdekerk and probably in a mist of driving snow. For the nonce he had to stand under the fire of unstinted eulogy hurled at him from every side.

"Well spoken, young man!"

"'Tis gallant bearing, forsooth!"

"Chivalry indeed is not yet dead in Holland."

"Are you a Dutchman, sir?"

To this direct query he gave reply:

"My father was one of those who came in English Leicester's train, whose home was among the fogs of England and under the shadow of her white, mysterious cliffs. My mother was Dutch, and he broke her heart——"

"Could he see you now, sir," said a

sober mynheer courteously, "he would give his sword to make amends."

"No doubt he gave that up to St. Peter long ago," rejoined Diogenes lightly.

"And Holland shall be proud to call you her son."

"I never liked the English," quoth another gentleman dryly.

During these brief exchanges of well meant compliments Cornelius had had the time to recover his usual sober demeanor. He drew up his spare figure and mechanically readjusted his collar and his doublet, which had become sorely disordered during this eventful day.

"I am as good as my word, sir," he said with becoming dignity. "My daughter's safety, her life and her honor are worth a fortune to me. I am reputed to be a wealthy man. My business is vast, and I have one million guilders lying at interest in the hands of Mynheer Bergansius, the world-famed jeweler of Amsterdam. One half of that money, sir, shall be yours, together with my boundless gratitude, if you deliver my daughter out of the hands of the malefactors who have seized her person and bring her back safe and sound to me."

"If life is granted me, sir," rejoined Diogenes imperturbably, without a blush or a tremor, "I will find your daughter and bring her safely to you as speedily as God will allow me."

"But you can not do this alone, sir," urged Cornelius, on whom doubt and fear had not yet lost their hold. "How will you set to work?"

"That, mynheer, is my secret," rejoined Diogenes placidly, "and the discussion of my plans might jeopardize their success."

"True, sir, but remember that the anxiety which I suffer now will be increased day by day, until it brings me on the threshold of the grave."

"I will remember that, mynheer, and will act as promptly as may be; but the malefactors have twenty-four hours' start of me. I may have to journey far ere I come upon their track."

"But you will have companions with you, sir? Friends who will help and stand by you? Those Sea Wolves are notorious for their daring and their cruelty. They may be more numerous too than you think——"

"The harder the task, mynheer," said Diogenes, with his enigmatical smile, "the

greater will be my satisfaction if I succeed in fulfilling it."

"But you have friends?" insisted Beresteyn.

"Two faithful allies, and my sword, the most faithful of them all," replied the other.

"You will let me furnish you with money in advance, I hope."

"Not till I have earned it, mynheer."

"You are proud, sir, as well as chivalrous," retorted Cornelius.

"I pray you, praise me not, mynheer. Greed after money is my sole motive in undertaking this affair."

"This I'll not believe," concluded Beresteyn, as he now arose to go. "Let me tell you, sir, that by your words, your very presence, you have put new life, new hope into me. Something tells me that I can trust you. Something tells me that you will succeed. Without kith or kindred, sir, a man may rise to fortune by his valor; 'tis writ in your face that you are such a one."

He shook Diogenes warmly by the hand. He was a different man from the poor grief-stricken rag of humanity who had entered this tavern a few hours before. His friends also shook the young man by the hand and said a great many more gracious and complimentary words to him, which he accepted in grave silence, his merry eyes alone twinkling with the humor of it all.



THE worthy burghers filed out of the tap room one by one in the wake of Cornelius. It was bitterly cold and the snow was again falling. They wrapped their fur-lined mantles closely around them ere going out of the warm room, but their hats they kept in their hands until the last, and were loath to turn their backs on Diogenes as they went. They felt as if they were leaving the presence of some great personage.

It was only when the heavy oaken door had fallen to for the last time behind the pompous, soberly clad figures of the mynheers and Diogenes found himself alone in the *tapperij* with his friend Frans Hals, that he at last gave vent to that overpowering sense of merriment which had all along threatened to break its bonds. He sank into the nearest chair.

"*Dondersteent! Dondersteent!*" he exclaimed between the several outbursts of irrepressible laughter which shook his power-

ful frame and brought the tears to his eyes. "Gods on Olympus, have you ever seen the like? *Verrek jezelf*, my good Hals! You should go straight to Paradise when you die for having brought about this heaven-born situation! *Dondersteent! Dondersteent!* But we must have a bottle of Beek's famous wine on this!"

And Frans Hals could not for the life of him understand what there was in this fine situation that should so arouse Diogenes's mirth.

But then Diogenes had always been an irresponsible creature, who was wont to laugh even at the most serious crises of his life.

CHAPTER XXII

A SPY FROM THE CAMP

"COME to my lodgings, Nicolaes. I have good news for you, and you do no good by cooling your temper here in the open."

Stoutenburg, coming out of the tavern, had found Beresteyn in the Hout Straat, walking up and down like a caged beast in a fury.

"The *vervloekte Keerl!* The *plepshurkl!* The *smeerlap!*" he ejaculated between his clenched teeth. "I'll not rest till I have struck him in the face first and killed him after!"

But he allowed Stoutenburg to lead him down the street to the narrow, gabled house where Stoutenburg lodged. Neither of them spoke, however; fury apparently beset them both equally, the kind of fury which is dumb, and all the more fierce because it finds no outlet in words.

Stoutenburg led the way up the wooden stairs to a small room at the back of the house. There was no light visible anywhere inside the building; and Nicolaes, not knowing his way about, stumbled upward in the dark, keeping close to the heels of his friend. The latter had pushed open the door of his room. Here a tallow candle, placed in a pewter sconce upon a table, shed a feeble, flickering light around. The room by this scanty glimmer looked to be scantily but cleanly furnished. There was a curtained bed in the paneling of the wall, and a table in the middle of the room with a few chairs, placed in a circle around it.

On one of these sat a man who appeared to be in the last stages of weariness. His

elbows rested on the table and his head was buried in his folded arms. His clothes looked damp and travel-stained. An empty mug and a couple of empty plates stood in front of him, beside a cap made of fur and a pair of skates.

At the sound made by the opening of the door and the entrance of the two men, he raised his head; and seeing the Lord of Stoutenburg he quickly jumped to his feet.

"Sit down, Jan," said Stoutenburg curtly. "You must be dog-tired. Have you had enough to eat and drink?"

"I thank you, my lord, I have eaten my fill," replied Jan. "And I am not so tired, now that I have had some rest."

"Sit down," reiterated Stoutenburg peremptorily. "And you too, my good Nicolaes," he added, as he offered a chair to his friend. "Let me just tell you the news which Jan has brought, and which should make you forget even your present just wrath, so glorious, so important is it."

He went up to a cabinet which stood in one corner of the room, and from it took a bottle and three pewter mugs. These he placed on the table, and filled the mugs with wine. Then he drew another chair close to the table and sat down.

"Jan," he resumed, turning to Beresteyn, "left the Stadtholder's camp at Sprang four days ago. He has traveled the whole way along the frozen rivers and waterways, halting only for the nights. The news which he brings carries for the bearer of such splendid tidings its own glorious reward. Jan, I must tell you, is with us heart and soul and hates the Stadtholder as much as I do. Is that not so, Jan?"

"My father was hanged two years ago," replied Jan simply, "because he spoke disparaging words of the Stadtholder. Those words were called treason, and my father was condemned to the gallows merely for speaking them."

Stoutenburg laughed his usual harsh, mirthless laugh.

"Yes! That is the way justice is now administered in the free and independent United Provinces," he said roughly. "Down on your knees, ye lumbering Dutchmen! Lick the dust off the boots of his Magnificence, Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange! Kiss his hand! Do his bidding! Give forth fulsome praise of his deeds! . . . How long, O God? How long?" he concluded with a bitter sigh.

"Only for a few more days, my lord," said Jan firmly. "The Stadtholder left his camp the same day as I did. But he travels slowly, in his sledge, surrounded by a body-guard of a hundred picked men. He is sick and must travel slowly. Yesterday he had only reached Dordrecht; today—if my information is correct—he should sleep at Ijssehmunde. But tomorrow he will be at Delft, where he will spend two days at the Prinsenhof."

"At Delft!" exclaimed Stoutenburg, as he brought his clenched fist down upon the table. "Thank Heaven! I have got him at last!"

He leaned across nearer still to Nicolaes, and in his excitement clutched his friend's wrists with nervous, trembling fingers, digging his nails into the other man's flesh till Beresteyn could have screamed with pain.

"From Delft," he murmured hoarsely, "the only way northward is along the left bank of the Schie; the river itself is choked with ice floes which render it impassable. Just before Ryswick the road crosses to the right bank of the river over a wooden bridge which we all know well. Half a league to the south of the bridge is the mill which has been my headquarters ever since I landed at Scheveningen three weeks ago. There I have my stores and my ammunition.

"Do you see it all, friend?" he queried, while a feverish light glowed in his eyes. "Is it not God who hath delivered the tyrant into my hands at last? I start for Ryswick tonight with you to help me, Nicolaes, with van Does and all my friends who will rally 'round me, with the thirty or forty men whom they have recruited for placing at my disposal.



"THE mill to the south of the wooden bridge which spans the Schie is our rallying-point. In the night before the Stadtholder starts on his way from Delft we make our final preparations. I have enough gunpowder stowed away at the mill to blow up the bridge. We'll dispose it in its place during that night.

"Then you, Nicolaes, or Heemskerk, shall fire the powder at the moment when the Stadtholder's escort is half way across the bridge. In the confusion and the panic caused by the explosion and the collapse of the bridge our men can easily overpower the Prince's bodyguard, while I, dagger in hand, do fulfil the oath which I swore

before the altar of God—to kill the Stadtholder with mine own hand!”

Gradually as he spoke his voice became more hoarse and more choked with passion. His excitement gained upon his hearers until both Nicolaes Beresteyn, his friend, and Jan, the paid spy and messenger, felt their blood tingling within their veins, their throats parching, their eyes burning as if they had been seared with living fire.

The tallow candle flickered in its socket; a thin draft from the flimsily constructed window blew its flame hither and thither, so that it lit up fitfully the faces of those three men, drawn closely together now in a bond of ambition and of hate.

“’Tis splendidly thought out,” said Beresteyn at last, with a sigh of satisfaction. “I do not see how the plan can fail.”

“Fail?” exclaimed Stoutenburg with a triumphant laugh. “Of course it can not fail! There are practically no risks even. The place is lonely, the mill a splendid rallying-point. We can all reach it by different routes and assemble there tomorrow eve or early the next day. That would give us another day and night, at least, to complete our preparations.

“I have forty barrels of gunpowder stowed away at the mill. I have new-pattern muskets, swords and pistols, gifts to me from the Archduchess Isabella—enough for our *coup*. Fail? How can we fail when everything has been planned, everything thought out? And when God has so clearly shown that He is on our side?”

Jan said nothing for the moment. He lowered his eyes, not caring just then to encounter those of his leader, for the remembrance had suddenly flashed through his mind of that other day—not so far distant yet—when everything too had been planned, everything thought out, and failure had brought about untold misery and a rich harvest for the scaffold.

Beresteyn, too, was silent now. Something of his friend’s enthusiasm was coursing through his veins also, but with him it was only the enthusiasm of ambition, of discontent, of a passion for intrigue, for plots and conspiracies, for tearing down one form of government in order to make room for another. But his enthusiasm was not kept at fever heat by that all-powerful fire of hate which made Stoutenburg forget everything save his desire for revenge.

The latter had pushed his chair impa-

tiently aside and now was pacing up and down the narrow room like some caged feline creature waiting for its meal. Beresteyn’s silence seemed to irritate him, for he threw from time to time quick, furtive glances on his friend.

“Nicolaes, why don’t you speak?” he said with sudden impatience.

“I was thinking of Gilda,” replied the other dully.

“Gilda? Why of her?”

“That knave has betrayed me, I am sure. He has hidden her away somewhere, not meaning to stick to his bargain with me, and then has come back to Haarlem in order to see if he can extort a large ransom for her from my father.”

“Bah! He wouldn’t dare!”

“Then why is he here?” exclaimed Beresteyn hotly. “Gilda should be in his charge! If he is here, where is Gilda?”

“Good Heaven, man!” ejaculated Stoutenburg, pausing in his restless walk and looking somewhat dazedly on his friend, as if he were just waking from some feverish sleep. “Good Heaven! You do not think that—”

“That her life is in danger from that knave?” rejoined Beresteyn quietly. “Well, no. I do not think that. I do not know what to think. But there is a hint of danger in that rascal’s presence here in Haarlem today.”

He arose, mechanically readjusted his cloak and looked around for his hat.

“What are you going to do?” asked Stoutenburg.

“Find the knave,” retorted the other, “and wring his neck if he does not give me satisfactory account of Gilda.”

“No, no! You must not do that—not in a public place, at any rate. The rascal would betray you if you quarreled with him; or, worse still, you would betray yourself. Think what it would mean to us now—at this moment—if it were known that you had a hand in the abduction of your sister. If she were traced and found, think what that would mean—denunciation, failure, the scaffold for us all!”

“Must I leave her, then, at the mercy of a man who is proved to be both a liar and a cheat?”

“No! You shall not do that. Let me try and get speech with him. He does not know me; and I think that I could find out what double game he is playing and

where our own danger lies. Let me try and find him."

"How can you do that?" asked Nicolaes.

"You remember the incident on New Year's Eve, when you and I traced that cursed adventurer to his own doorstep?"

"Yes."

"Then you remember the Spanish wench and the old cripple to whom our man relinquished his lodgings on that night."

"Certainly I do."



"WELL, yesterday when the hour came for the rascal to seize Gilda, I could not rest in this room. I wanted to see, to know what was going on. Gilda means so much to me that I think remorse played havoc with my prudence then, and I went out into the Groote Markt to watch her come out of church.

"I followed her at a little distance and saw her walking rapidly along the bank of the Oude Gracht. She was accosted by a woman who spoke to her from the depths of the narrow passage which leads to the disused chapel of St. Pieter. Gilda was quickly captured by the brute whom you had paid to do this monstrous deed, and I stood by like an abject coward, not raising a hand to save her from this cruel outrage."

He paused a moment and passed his hand across his brow, as if to chase away the bitter recollection of that crime of which he had been the chief instigator.

"Why do you tell me all that?" queried Beresteyn somberly. "What I did, I did for you and for the triumph of your cause."

"I know, I know," replied Stoutenburg with a sigh. "May Heaven reward you for the sacrifice. But I acted merely for mine own selfish ends, for my ambition and my revenge. I love Gilda beyond all else on earth, yet I saw her sacrificed for me and did not raise a finger to save her."

"It is too late for remorse," retorted Beresteyn roughly. "If Gilda had been free to speak of what she heard in the cathedral on New Year's Eve, you and I today would have had to flee the country as you fled from it once before—branded as traitors, recaptured mayhap, dragged before the tribunal of a man who has already shown that he knows no mercy. Gilda's freedom would have meant for you, for me, for Heemskerk, van Does and all the others, torture first and a traitor's death at the last."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"You need not remind me of that," rejoined Stoutenburg more calmly. "Gilda has been sacrificed for me; and, by—, I will requite her for all that she has endured! My life, my love are hers; and as soon as the law sets me free to marry she will indeed have a proud position."

"For the moment she is at the mercy of that blackguard——"

"And I tell you that I can find out where she is."

"How?"

"The woman who accosted Gilda last night, who acted for the knave as a decoy, was the Spanish wench whom he had befriended the night before. Money or threats should help me to extract something from her."

"But where can you find her?"

"At the same lodgings where she has been these two nights, I feel sure."

"It is worth trying," mused Beresteyn.

"And in the meantime we must not lose sight of our knave. Jan, my good man, that shall be your work. Mynheer Beresteyn will be good enough to go with you as far as the *tapperij* of 'The Lame Cow' and there point out to you a man whom it will be your duty to follow this evening, until you find out where he intends to pitch his tent for the night. You understand?"

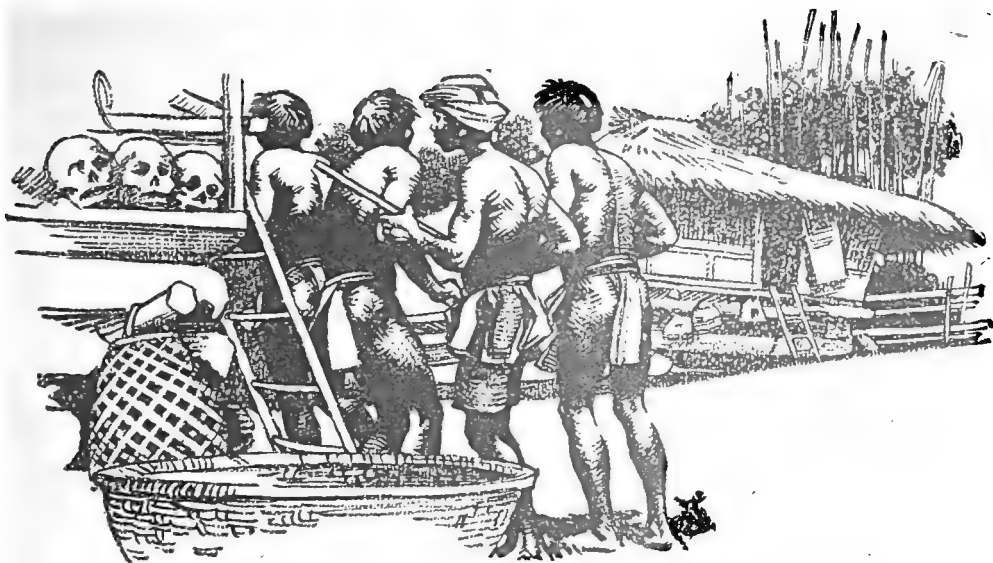
"Yes, my lord," said Jan, smothering as best he could a sigh of weariness.

"It is all for the ultimate triumph of our revenge, good Jan," quoth Stoutenburg significantly. "The work of watching which you will do this night is at least as important as that which you have so bravely accomplished. The question is, have you strength left to do it?"

Indeed the question seemed unnecessary now. At the word "revenge" Jan had already straightened out his long, lean figure; and though traces of fatigue might still linger in his drawn face, it was obvious that the spirit within was prepared to fight all bodily weaknesses.

"There is enough strength in me, my lord," he said simply, "to do your bidding now as always for the welfare of Holland and the triumph of our faith."

After which Stoutenburg put out the light, and with a final curt word to Jan and an appeal to Beresteyn he led the way out of the room, down the stairs and finally into the street.



The Etiquette of Cannibalism

BY W. ROBERT FORAN

AS THE result of investigations by recent explorers in Papua, or New Guinea, there can be no doubt that cannibalism still prevails among the savage tribes of the interior, although the natives observe considerable reticence with regard to the practise. It is difficult, however, to determine whether the custom arises from religious or gastronomic considerations, or merely for revenge.

The evidence given in a recent murder trial in Papua has, in spite of its gruesome subject, a touch of unconscious humor. A certain Avai, a native of Baimuru in the Gulf of Papua, was charged with the murder of Laura, a woman of Baroi, who was living with her husband and co-wife in Baimuru.

In Avai's evidence for the defense he states: "Bai-i told us to kill the three Baroi people. He told us to get a canoe, and we did so. We chased them and caught them in Era Bay. There were Aimara and his two wives Laura and Aipuru. Kairi killed Aimara, I killed Laura, and Iomu killed Aipuru. I killed Laura with a dagger made of cassowary bone. We put the bodies in the canoe and brought them back to Baimuru.

"I did not bite off Laura's nose, for it is not the custom to bite off the nose of a person whom you have yourself killed. If I kill a man, some one else bites off his nose.

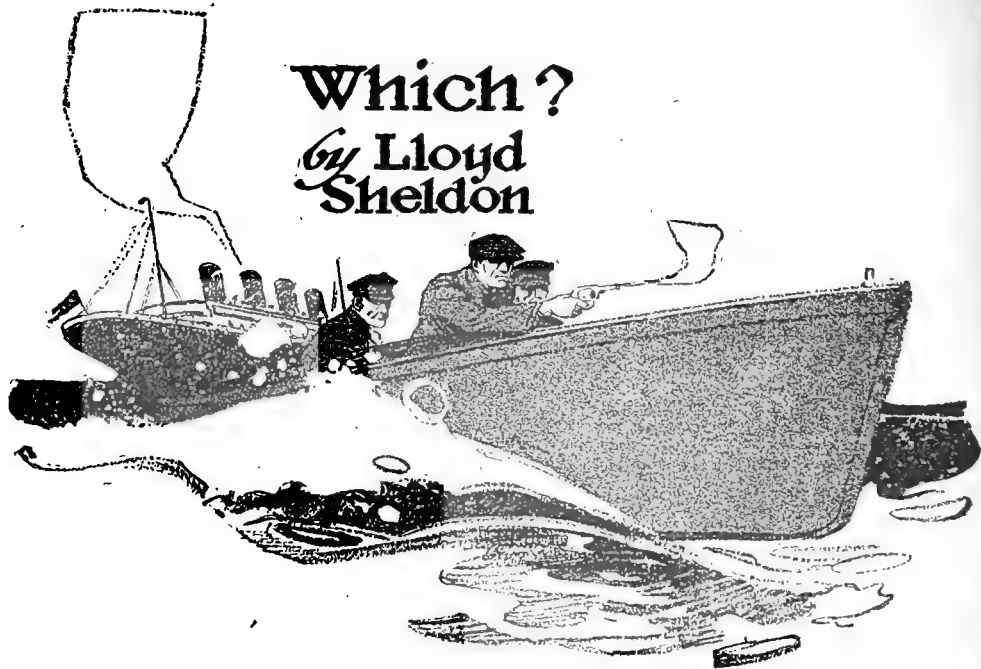
Aua bit off Laura's nose, Kwai bit off Aimara's nose, and Omeara bit off Aipuru's nose. We bite off the noses; we do not cut them off.

"Before we go to kill any one we consult the Kopiravi (wickerwork figures about four feet high, which are kept behind a screen at the end of the *ravi*, or men's house); the spirit comes out of the *ravi* to the canoe, and, if the expedition is to be successful, the canoe rocks. The spirit is invisible; the Kopiravi do not come out.

"We reached Baimuru at night, and left the bodies of the slain man and two women in the canoe until morning. Then we took them to the *ravi* and put them on the platform outside the front of the *ravi*. Later we cut them into small pieces, mixed the pieces with sago, cooked and wrapped the food up in the leaves of nipa palm, and distributed it among our friends. Women and children are permitted to eat human flesh.

"I ate a hand of Aipuru; but I did not eat Laura, because I had killed her. It is not our custom to eat a person whom you have killed. If, after you have killed a man, you sit on a coconut, with a coconut under each heel, and get your daughter to boil a man's heart, you may drink the water in which the heart has been boiled; but you must be sitting on the coconuts all the time, otherwise you may not eat a part of a person whom you have slain. That is our custom."

Which? *by* Lloyd Sheldon



STEVENS felt a certain grim contentment as he wrapped his ulster snugly about him and, settling back in his deck chair, watched the white wake from the vessel fade away until it became lost in the mist veiled harbor of Fishguard.

Below, in one of the second-class cabins, resting in irons and in the custody of his man, was the counterfeiter he had tracked over most of Southern Europe, and had finally found in Trieste, tinting picture postcards with the same expertness as he had colored bogus one-hundred-dollar bills.

Five months before, the Chief had called him to the inner offices of the Secret Service Bureau in Washington, looked at him, and said:

"Stevens, I'm going to give you your chance. This counterfeiter has eluded half a dozen good men, landed in Naples and disappeared. You are going to have a job that will make the cleaning of the Augean stables seem like the sweeping of a Harlem flat. But I've faith in you. If you get him, anything is yours."

And the Chief was pleased—that Stevens knew from the brief cablegram now in his pocket.

The "I knew you would do it," was al-

most cryptic, but to him it told of genuine trust and affection.

He mused over the next possible assignment; then, realizing that he was still five days from New York, he sank back and smiled at his own impetuosity.

It was evening—the evening of a chill, gray day. The deck was nearly clear of passengers, and Stevens, in the quiet satisfaction that he was offending no one, drew a pipe from his pocket and nursed it to a comfortable glow.

As he lazed, he became aware that a maid—a rather dainty, refined little person—was arranging some rugs in a chair close by. It annoyed him somewhat, but his displeasure quickly gave way before his wonder at the marvelous richness of the fabrics.

They plainly were the property of a young and probably pampered woman. Soft, luxurious and of Oriental texture, they stood out with their vivid colors against the white cabins and the drab sky and sea. From them came a delicious yet delicate perfume that rose above the pungent odor of the wind-blown spray.

A bit impatiently he waited.

Perhaps fifteen minutes later, a tall, gracefully formed young woman in a roomy golf coat appeared. Her face was veiled—

so lightly, however, that he caught the swift glance of blue eyes and the glint of golden hair.

Stevens noted that when she had perceived him she made a gesture of disapproval to her maid regarding the location of her chair.

"But this is more to the leeward," said the latter. "You will be more comfortable here."

Stevens knocked the ashes from his pipe, and slipped it back into his pocket.

"Is there anything more that you would like, Miss Janice?" asked the maid.

"No," she replied; and Stevens, who had waited to hear her speak, was not disappointed in the pleasant modulation of her voice.

The maid left, and as she passed his chair he saw an impish sparkle in her eyes, as if she had just played a prank on both.

The young woman, however, sat silently in bland indifference to him.



THEN came the sharp, staccato snapping of the wireless above him.

Instantly she turned, in alarm, to the Government Secret Service man.

"Will you pardon me?" she asked. "I want to ask you to do a great favor. I think that message is for me. Would you mind getting it? My maid is gone. And I——" She hesitated as if some explanation which she was reluctant to give might be required by her strange anxiety. "It is very important," she added simply, and on the last words her voice broke somewhat.

"Why, I am only too glad to be of any service to you," replied Stevens solicitously.

He jumped up lightly, and hurried to the room where the wireless apparatus was stationed.

The operator was still taking the message in a sort of mystified manner. It was even necessary to repeat most of it.

"Some one is going to have a deuce of a job making this out," said the young, merry-eyed chap at the keys.

"Is the message for Miss Janice—er——" Stevens paused. He suddenly recalled that he did not even know her name.

The operator grinned understandingly at his embarrassment.

"Got to expect that when you're only three hours out," he said. "No, this isn't for any woman. It is for a chap named Stevens."

"Why, that's for me," said the other in surprise.

The young man looked at him quizzically.

"What is the number of your stateroom?"

Stevens produced his key. It was Number 57.

The operator compared it with his passenger chart, and handed him the message.

"I guess I don't need any further identification," he added. "It is in code. If you can read it, you are welcome to it."

The Secret Service man looked at it quickly.

Clover brought seven times ought remain in Boston. New Broad family feud. Agent in your city. Tell young cousin, Clouds. Book received J.

He guessed its purport immediately. The words "clover" and "agent" stood out clearly. They were the most used words in the United States Secret Service code. The former meant "diamonds"; the latter, "smuggler."

He turned quickly to the operator.

"I want you to say nothing about this message," he said firmly. "And I want you to keep tab on every message that comes and to give me a copy."

Seeing the surprised look on the younger man's face at this peremptory command, he opened his coat and displayed his small gold Service badge.

"I guess what you say goes," replied the other.

Stevens took out a long, narrow, black-covered book from the inner pocket of his vest. Owing to the facility with which foreign agents and others work out any mathematical or verbal codes, the Secret Service Bureau in Washington has adopted for its work a system of frequently changed word-equivalents.

The first sentence was translated easily into "Diamonds worth four hundred thousand dollars purchased in Paris."

To get a correct figure, three is subtracted from the given figure. "Times" is "hundred" and "ought" is "thousand." Boston is known by its civic antithesis Paris.

"Feud" he found to be "gang," and he read into the record the bewildering information, "Old Broad Street gang."

To the lay eye this would have conveyed little, but to Stevens it told of renewed operations by one of the most daring and resourceful of all bands of smugglers. This clique, a sort of inner circle of some of the

wealthiest yet most lawless diamond merchants in the vicinity of Maiden Lane, once had an office in Broad Street and they still bore the name of the old address.

Two years before they had been credited with having smuggled, in a dozen ingenious ways, some two million dollars in diamonds in eight months. When the leakage was discovered at the Customs Office and two trusted employees, their lips sealed, were sent for long terms to Atlanta, the smuggling suddenly ceased.

In the interval the suspected diamond merchants had been watched unceasingly by the Chief's special agents in all the diamond marts in Europe, and with this apparent result.

Eagerly Stevens puzzled out the sentence, "Agents in your city." As he had anticipated, it translated into "Smuggler in your vessel."

When he found the equivalents in the next line, he stopped short in amazement. In plain English, it read, "Suspect fashionable young woman."

He sought the word, "Clouds." It was "golden hair," in the code book.

Rather unpleasantly his thoughts darted back to the young woman beside him. It didn't seem possible that she could be involved in so colossal a criminal enterprise. Yet he asked himself, "Why not?"

The best crooks invariably worked along lines of apparent impossibilities. But the prospective task was not one that he relished.

Stevens disliked to shadow women. He was still a wee bit old-fashioned in his notions about them. He preferred a man hunt.

For a moment he mused, and then returned to the code message. He guessed the purport of the next phrase—"Book received J."

Letters he knew to be interpreted by the third letter beyond. Her baggage was therefore marked "M."

Here at least was a definite, particularizing clue.



THE young woman was pacing slowly up and down the deck in front of her chair when he returned. The breeze had lifted her clinging dress slightly and disclosed an exquisitely slender ankle. Hers was a refined beauty to which any man would do homage, and Stevens, against his own will, fervently wished that

her name might be anything from Adams to Lynn or from Nahm to Zaccharius.

"Was it for me?" she asked.

Obviously she was under a severe strain, for her breast rose and fell with sharp, quick breaths.

"No," he said, with a rather searching gaze. "The wireless was for me, by an odd whim of chance."

"Thank you," she replied with still a trace of anxiety in her voice. "It was very thoughtful of you, to go to this trouble for me."

Feigning as well as he could a casual interest, Stevens said—"I was in a very odd predicament. You know I never heard your name, at least not the full name. I chanced to overhear your maid, when she addressed you as 'Miss Janice.'"

"How stupid of me!" she replied. "It's Moore—Janice Moore."

For a moment Stevens could not speak.

"Miss Moore," he said finally, "I am very pleased to meet you. My name is Stevens." There was a slight unsteadiness in his voice that he tried hard to conceal.

When she had returned to her chair she spoke more freely, but each word cut him like a knife. For the first time he hated the service, and wished it well on the other side of the Styx.

Then again the sound of the wireless broke about them, and she turned to him.

"Would you mind?" she asked; and feeling like a Judas he hurried to the wireless station.

"Here's your Janice," said the operator.

"I want to read it," said Stevens, coloring.

"You can go as far as you like, I suppose," returned the other. "The sky is the limit for Uncle Sam."

Stevens read it.

"Father is better," was the brief message.

It mystified him. Was it a veiled warning or a wholly irrelevant and innocently sent message? There was nothing to arouse suspicion, save possibly its rather apparent simplicity.

"Put it in an envelope," he ordered, and hurried back with it, determined to be on the alert to catch any telltale look on her face as she read it.

Immediately upon opening the envelope and glancing at the contents, her face lighted with happiness and she clasped his hand gratefully.

"It's such good news," she exclaimed. "You were very kind."

Almost gaily she went back to her cabin.

In a quandary, Stevens sank down in his chair to puzzle it out. It seemed improbable that a woman could act as well as that. Her delight was too genuine.

Still, wouldn't a young woman playing a big game—a game in which some four hundred thousand dollars were at stake—behave almost precisely as this young woman had? He admitted to himself that his judgment was somewhat obscured by her challenging charm. Contradictory thoughts and ill predicated deductions rioted in his mind. It was rotten work at the best, this woman business.

Restless and ill at ease, he entered the library. As he crossed to the shelves, he saw a young woman, her back turned somewhat to him.

The soft glow of the shaded lights above her fell upon her hair and transformed it into fine-spun gold.

At first glance he believed she was Miss Moore, but as soon as she turned he realized his error. Her features, if anything, were more regular than the other young woman's and her eyes a deeper blue. Even in dress she was rather more *chic* and attractive.

His intent gaze apparently embarrassed her. A slight flush in her cheeks, she went to a *lôte-à-lôte*, the other seat of which was occupied by an elderly lady, and sat down beside her.

Stevens watched both as they read, more perplexed than ever. The elderly woman, while not precisely a motherly sort of person, was cultured and gentle-mannered. Apparently, she was not well, for she leaned over to the girl and said, "Ethel, I think that I had better go to my stateroom."

"Why, auntie," exclaimed the golden-haired young person, "I am so sorry."

She rose eagerly and put her arms about the waist of the older woman.

A gold vanity purse dropped from her lap and bounded along the carpeted floor in the direction of Stevens. He picked it up. As he did so, he saw a dainty monogram engraved upon a raised medallion in the center. It was the letter "M."



IN A DAZE, he handed it back to her. There was an odd fleeting expression on her face as she thanked him, and long after they had disappeared through the doorway Stevens tried to fathom that look.

It was as if she distrusted him. Nor was her distrust entirely unfounded, he told himself. He had stood and had gazed at her as deliberately as an ogling Johnnie, perhaps the more disagreeably because he had been unconscious of his own discourtesy. Then, too, in his desire to read the monogram, he had probably scrutinized the purse boorishly.

She was young—three or four years younger than the other girl; and it seemed unlikely that a girl of nineteen or twenty would be entrusted with the responsibility of a four-hundred-thousand-dollar smuggling venture.

As in the case of the young woman of the deck, she had no sooner loomed upon the horizon as a possibility than she was whisked away in a maze of apparently natural explanations.

Suspicion that had been so directly focused upon one woman was now equally focused on two, leaving him hopelessly bewildered. It was a ticklish situation. One was not only as innocent of the smuggling plot as the sun-kissed rose, but she was obviously well connected, and the utmost care must be taken to protect her good name. The other was one of the most cunning adventuresses that he had ever chanced upon, and decidedly the most dangerous, because of the magnitude of her scheme and the ingenuity with which she concealed her real self. She could not be intercepted too quickly.

But—which was she?

In his desire to ferret out some tiny clue that might give him a hint of hidden character, he went out on the deck again.

Miss Moore had not returned, and seemingly had no intention of doing so, for the maid was folding the rugs once more.

"Those are very beautiful rugs," ventured Stevens.

"Yes," she said, "they are like silk. Just touch them."

He let his fingers pass over them. They were as gossamer.

"Miss Moore found them two years ago in Babachek."

"Babachek?" he repeated.

"Yes; it's forty or fifty miles north of Smyrna."

"Your mistress travels much?"

"Much," the maid answered discreetly, and sped away with the rugs.

Curious, Stevens crossed into the library

once more. He took down an atlas. As she had said, Babachek was above Smyrna, perhaps fifty miles. Geographically the maid was consistent.

Besides, there was nothing of the coached servant in her; she was rather the type that not only believes in the whimsical romances born between paper covers, but also likes to help them along.

Stevens decided to consult Captain Turner, from whom he obtained the name of the girl he had seen in the library. It was Marshall—Beatrice Marshall. She was traveling with her aunt, a Mrs. Harden.

He explained to Captain Turner the difficult assignment that he had, and showed him his credentials.

"It is possible," suggested Stevens, "that neither of the girls is in the leastwise connected with the smuggling plot. There may be another on board. At all events we must make sure."

The Captain assigned several maids to the task of getting a description of those with the initial "M." Diligent search was made of the ship. The baggage room was carefully overhauled. But the only two young women with luggage labeled with an "M" were the two Stevens had already begun to shadow.

During the examination, Stevens's suspicions were again riveted on Miss Moore, as all her baggage had a peculiar monogrammed "M" on it, while Miss Marshall's—at least that in the baggage room—was marked simply with "B. M."

There still remained the possibility of a different initialing on the steamer trunks in her stateroom, which they had not yet dared to search, lest they arouse suspicion. This was a possibility to be investigated, but he was now confident that Miss Moore was the more to be watched.

Somewhat elated by the narrowing-down of the clues, he returned to the wireless station to learn the address from which the message had been sent originally. It would be handy in the event of an exigency, so that a separate investigation might be conducted on shore.

As both he and the operator were intent on the record, there was a faint knock at the door.

"Come in," said Edwardes, the operator.

The door opened.

"Is this the wireless station?" asked a young woman.

The Secret Service Man swung around dumfounded. It was the girl in the library—Miss Marshall.

Plainly she was confused by his presence—confused even before he had turned a sharp, suspicious glance upon her. Then the lines of her lips tightened, and she met his eyes with just a hint of a challenge.

"Can you please tell me how soon I can get a message direct to New York?" she asked of the operator.

"We can send one by radio to Fishguard, and it can be cabled from there," he replied.

"No, I want to send it direct."

"Then not until day after tomorrow, Wednesday. We'll get into the wireless zone about one P. M., if we continue on schedule. But we must wait until about five o'clock to send them; the air is clearer then of disturbing influences."

"Thank you so much," she said. She left immediately with a suggestion of a smile at Stevens.



THAT smile bothered Stevens—bothered him as the quizzical expression on her face had when she first passed out of the library.

"That's an odd inquiry," exclaimed Stevens, turning to Edwardes.

"Oh, it's made sometimes; usually not so early in the trip, though."

"But why should she want to wait for a direct communication?"

"Maybe it's the fascination of sending her first wireless, and maybe——"

"Maybe what?" pressed Stevens.

"Well, there have been times when the person wanted the message picked up by a private station."

"Has that ever been done?"

"Oh, yes. Once a young girl admitted to me that she wanted to surprise a sweetheart who had an experimental station. She sent seven before she found him on the job. Then once— You remember the time they tried to smuggle the black pearls into New York, two years ago. Well, a chap pestered me to death trying to get the first message into New York direct. His message turned out to be a phony. They suspected him afterward. Couldn't get anything on him, though."

From that moment Stevens again threw his suspicions on Miss Marshall. The more he watched her, the more unlike the girl

he had first seen in the library did she appear to be. On deck in the sunlight, she was anything but the reserved type. She was irrepressible, and instantly made friends with every one with whom she came in contact. There was not a child that did not instantly run to her and beg her to enter into some game. He remembered an old aphorism of the Service: "Children and crime don't mix well in women." Yet her previous action had been too telltale to be outweighed by this delightfully revealed character.

To make it appear that he was not particularly interested in her, he cultivated Miss Moore. When his suspicions had been first directed upon this young woman of the deck chair, he had asked the Captain to have her escorted to the same table with him. Captain Turner had done so, and the two were thrown easily into a shipboard acquaintance.

Not once was there the slightest inconsistency in anything that Miss Moore said to arouse distrust. She appeared to like him frankly. At times their conversation verged on the intimate. Still at no time was there a suggestion of flirtation on her part. There was nothing of the adventuress in her make-up.

She had been on her way to Rome when her mother had cabled her, telling of her father's illness, and she spoke of the thoughtfulness that her mother had shown in having the first reassuring news cabled to New York and then relayed to the *Colossus*.

Several times she had in a subtle manner endeavored to learn what profession he was in, and he had always laughingly replied, "Oh, a sort of Jack of all trades."

To this rather insistent inquisitiveness, though he balanced it carefully, he attached little importance. It was ever the way of a maid to inquire the manner of man, he remembered.

Miss Marshall evinced, on the other hand, little or no interest in him. He had twice chanced upon her purposefully, and on each occasion she had chatted amiably for several minutes and then had excused herself to go to her aunt.

At five o'clock on Wednesday Stevens stationed himself rather near the wireless room, and saw her enter punctually, a slip of paper in her hand. When she left, Stevens turned inside.

"What was the message?" he demanded.

"Here it is," said the other. "There is not much to it." It read:

— Mrs. James Marshall
Waldorf N. Y. C.

Home Saturday morning. Perfectly thrilling trip.
BEATRICE.

"I would hardly describe this trip as thrilling," commented Stevens.

"Oh, she's young, and it's probably her first trip home," said the operator.

"Edwardes, I'm not so sure that this isn't a blind," remarked Stevens, after a pause. "Please send this to our Service Bureau in New York."

He took his code book and framed a message, directing them to see if the message sent from the *S. S. Colossus* to the Waldorf had been claimed and by whom.

It was nearly ten o'clock when the reply came. Stevens was in the library. Miss Marshall was also there with her aunt, looking over some views in souvenir books. They glanced up as a boy entered, calling his name. Stevens took the envelope and tore it open quickly, looking askance at Miss Marshall as he did so. Both she and her aunt were intent upon their book.

The message, as before, was in code:

Mrs. M. all right. Been there nearly month. Wealthy widow.

A bit disgusted with his own luck, he tore and crumpled both envelope and message and threw the pieces into the waste-paper basket at his side.

Then he went back to the operator.

"Edwardes, send this for me immediately."

It was to the Chief, and it read, translated:

Are you certain description is correct? Two of them that fit, but nothing least suspicious. Can't you send more detailed description?

In no pleasant humor, Stevens returned to the library and found that Miss Marshall had moved toward where he sat and was turning over some of the magazines on the table. Instantly suspicious, he looked in the waste-paper basket where he had thrown the torn papers.

It was empty.

He looked up quickly. She had not noticed him. Slowly he moved toward her, and as he did so he heard a cheery "Hello!"

It was Miss Moore.

In a daze, he heard her say:

"I'm awfully glad you are here. I've been searching all over the shelves trying to find Lassiter's 'Journey to Thebes'. Won't you help me? It's here, for one of the passengers just told me."

"Why, certainly," he said, his thoughts still swimming. "I will be only too glad to help."

Miss Marshall, hearing them speak, looked up, and nodding pleasantly to Miss Moore and then to him, turned back to her aunt.

Stevens was morally certain that it was she who had taken the scraps of paper, yet there was still the girl of the deck chair. Why had she come into the library so unexpectedly? It was natural enough. He was aware of that. When the book had been found, her reasons, too, seemed consistent.

As she bade him good night, he dropped down into the chair beside the waste-paper basket. He mentally diagrammed the spot where he had been. Both had stood within a dozen feet of the basket.

"This will put me in Matteawan before I get through with it," he said, smiling uncomfortably at his own dilemma.

Late the next afternoon he received this reply from his Chief:

Certain smuggler aboard. Description is correct. No further obtainable. Keep close watch.



AND watch Stevens did. He took the briefest possible time for sleep. He followed every movement of both, playing no favorites. He half expected now that they might be working in conjunction. But not only was there nothing on which to base this belief, but the more he studied them and their actions the more absolutely he became convinced that they never had known each other before coming aboard.

He managed to search the staterooms of each. In neither was there anything to give him a real clue. Pointing once more, however, to Miss Marshall, was the discovery that two of the smaller pieces of her baggage were marked with the single initial letter "M."

On Friday afternoon there was the usual bustle on deck that preceded the landing on the following morning.

"When do we reach quarantine?" asked Miss Moore.

"About two o'clock in the morning—possibly a little before," replied Stevens.

"Oh, that's horrid!" she exclaimed. "I wanted to be awake when we came up the lower bay from Sandy Hook. I love that part of the voyage. It is so calm, so restful."

"But why don't you?" he urged.

"And look a wreck the next morning!" she exclaimed, dimpling. "No, indeed!"

It was late that evening, however, when she finally bade him good night. There had been a delightful moon, and with glasses they had caught a glimpse of lights as they swung into the channel south of Long Island.

"Now, Mr. Mysterious Man," she said, as he left her at the saloon door, "please come and see me. I will be at the Ritz for a few days. My father is there. I really want you to, very much."

And with a rather sentimental feeling, he eagerly replied that he would.

He had, despite this embryonic romance, been on the alert all evening. He had thought of calling the man watching the counterfeiter below to assist him, but he was merely a guard, and more likely to botch the affair than to render him any real service. Therefore he sauntered toward Miss Marshall, who even after her aunt had retired had remained on deck. She was inquiring of the admiring first mate just which lights each one they discovered was.

Several times she clapped her hands with unfeigned joy as she checked off the progress of the vessel. Her rather cool attitude toward Stevens seemed to have disappeared, in her eager excitement at nearing port. When the hour came for the first mate to relieve the Captain, she turned to Stevens.

"You'll keep me company, won't you?" she said. "I'm bound and determined to stay up and watch the vessel get into quarantine."

The first mate, West, invited them to the bridge with him. There in the moonlight, the breeze catching and holding a straying curl, she had never been more attractive. The color of warm roses was in her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled with genuine love of life. Stevens wrestled with his doubts.

After they had passed Sandy Hook a light but rather clammy mist settled down, and gave an eery look to the lights along the shore.

"And what light is that?" she asked, pointing to one perhaps a half mile ahead.

"The Romer Shoal Light, I believe," said Stevens.

"And does that mean we are nearly in?"

"There's still about a half hour before we finally drop anchor at Quarantine."

"As long as that?" she asked. "It is getting dreadfully chilly. Br-r-r!" She shivered slightly and then added: "I'd better get a wrap, then. Will you excuse me for a minute?"

"Can't I find one for you?" asked Stevens.

"No, thanks; it will only take me a minute." She tripped down the stairs from the bridge and disappeared under the deck roof.

No sooner had she left, however, than Stevens recalled that she had been rather warmly clad, and that the chill had come on a little suddenly. He hurried for the steps. As he reached the rail leading down, a white object went hurtling into the water below him. It looked like a life buoy, possibly a foot and a half in diameter, and four or five inches in thickness.

Undoubtedly it was weighted, for it sank quickly, then bobbed up, more than half submerged.

With a cry, he ran to the mate.

"Stop the vessel and lower one of the launches," he yelled.

"What's up?" demanded West anxiously.

"Smugglers," replied Stevens. "Parcel overboard."

Expecting to see Miss Marshall fleeing to her stateroom, the Secret Service man dashed down the steps to the deck below.

Instead, she was coming smilingly toward him, a shawl over her shoulders.

Her superb calmness exasperated him.

"You—you——" he shouted, and she shrank before the savagery of his voice.

Angered, he rushed toward her. Then suddenly he stopped short. Just beyond stood the other girl at the rail, her hair a pallid gold in the translucent moonlight.



"ARE you mad?" asked the younger girl, now rendered furious by this change in Stevens.

"God knows whether I am or not," he exclaimed hoarsely, still looking at Miss Moore, who appeared utterly surprised by his strange conduct.

"Which of you threw that buoy overboard?" he demanded.

Both stared at him blankly.

"Which?" he repeated threateningly.

"What do you mean?" flashed Miss

Moore, with an unexpected fire in her eyes.

"I thought that you were going to remain in your stateroom so that you wouldn't be a 'wreck' in the morning," said Stevens sarcastically.

"I believe that I have a perfect right to do as I please without being questioned," returned Miss Moore heatedly. "But if it sets you at ease at all, I came on deck because I couldn't sleep."

Stevens ignored her explanation, and said with slowly measured words, "Which of you threw a buoy overboard, less than ten minutes ago?"

There was no answer.

"Which? I intend to know."

He stepped forward menacingly. Tall, muscular, his clean-cut jaws firmly set, and his dark eyes blazing, he was not a man to be held off by an evasive, unsatisfactory answer.

Miss Marshall cowered against the wall of the cabins and then screamed.

"You beast!" she shouted.

Attracted by her cry of fear, a dozen passengers ran up to her side.

"What is it?" they exclaimed. "What is it?"

Miss Marshall pointed to Stevens with fine scorn.

"That beast, there, dared—dared——"

She tried to finish her sentence, but her voice choked in her anger.

"He insulted us," said Miss Moore, more quietly.

Incensed, the crowd edged toward Stevens, murmuring among themselves.

One man, a huge, broad-shouldered Southerner, doubled his fists and pushed his way up to Stevens.

"Come out of here," he snarled. "Get away from these ladies, and I'll——"

"Don't be a —— fool with your heroics," said Stevens, with a quick thrust of his arm that sent the other staggering back against the rail. "I haven't any time for this nonsense now."

The Southerner, recovering his balance, lunged forward; and just in time to prevent a pitched fight the first mate leaped down the stairs and, separating them, said tensely:

"The boat is ready, Mr. Stevens. Everybody back."

A white boat swung from the hawsers above. Two seamen were already busy in it, starting the engine.

"Quick!" shouted West. And both leaped in it as it was lowered.

Hardly had they struck the water before the engine was in operation, and they sped back in the direction of the buoys.

Stevens, wondering which of the young women was evincing the greater interest in the mad race for the prize flung to the waves, looked up at the steamship looming dark above them.

The dim deck lights disclosed them both leaning upon the rail, their eyes intent upon him. His musing was abruptly cut short by West.

"We must have gone about a half mile beyond the point where it was thrown off," said the first mate. "I should judge it was just off the Romer Shoal Light, wasn't it?"

"Just about," said Stevens.

The boat plunged forward with added speed.

Gripping the edge of the boat, Stevens peered out. The moonlight assisted them; for, some two hundred yards beyond, a small round object shone, a glistening gray in the water. At first it appeared to be the buoy, yet it was too large.

"See there!" called Stevens quickly. "What is that?"

West snatched his glasses.

The grayish object lengthened into a cigar-like shape. Then a slab that caught the sheen of the moonlight rose up slowly, and a man's head appeared where it had been.

"Pull her to the last notch," he yelled to the seamen at the engine, "even if you blow off the cylinder caps. They've got a submarine."

The boat leaped and shot through the waves, sending the spray from either side like two long white feathers.

The submarine still lay riding easily on the choppy waves, much like a lazy whale. Suddenly it lurched to one side. The man in the conning-box reached forward and strained for something in the waves beside him. It was the buoy.

Perhaps one hundred yards separated the two craft. Instantly Stevens whisked out his revolver.

"Drop it!" shouted Stevens.

The man grinned, glanced toward him, and hauled the buoy to the rim of the conning-box.

The Secret Service man fired—three rapid shots. At the last, the man dropped.

The buoy fell into the hold; the cap of the conning-box slammed down; the long, round-back vessel stuck its blunt nose under the next wave, and disappeared.

Only an oily film remained on the water as they flew past—a vague tracery of what they had seen.

West looked at Stevens.

"Did you hit him?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Probably it doesn't make much difference."

Silent and disappointed, they returned to the vessel. Neither of the young women was on deck.



AS SOON AS Stevens reached the rail he vaulted over it and dashed to the wireless cabin.

"Quick!" he exclaimed to the operator, who was still dozing in his bunk. "Send this to the Service Bureau in New York."

The operator sprang to his feet, blinked, and was at his table in a moment.

"Right, sir."

"I'll dictate it," said Stevens. "No code. Ready?"

Chief. Jewels thrown from vessel in buoy. Snatched up by submarine off Romer Light. Nose toward Jersey shore.

His face grim-set, he returned to West, who stood explaining the sensational get-away to the Captain.

"Mr. Stevens," exclaimed the Captain angrily, "we'll search the ship immediately. There should be a life buoy missing in the stateroom of the girl who is connected with that gang."

When they entered Miss Marshall's stateroom she protested. She stormed. She threatened suit for the humiliation they had caused her. Then she wept. But the Captain was adamant.

"This is too important to stop on ceremony," he said. "Mr. Stevens has a perfect right, I believe, under the circumstances."

As Stevens searched Miss Marshall's room for some bit of evidence that might connect her with the buoy, she followed his movements, her eyes hardening behind her tears.

"From the first I knew that you were a brute," she said. "I should have expected nothing else."

There was no clue that incriminated in

the slightest. Neither life buoy of the pair above her berth was missing. Almost certain now of the other's guilt, they turned into Miss Moore's stateroom. As they entered, she reproached them with a sad, wondering gaze.

"I don't know whether you are the most injured, innocent young woman that it has been my misfortune to offend, or the cleverest young woman who ever entered the freelancery of crime," Stevens said, meeting her eyes for that brief moment. Her eyes fell, nor did she look at him again.

After a ten-minutes' search nothing was disclosed that even tended to connect her with the smuggling. Both of the buoys in her stateroom, too, were in their place.

"Whoever pulled the trick had the buoy prepared and in her baggage," said West, and Stevens agreed with him.

The next morning neither of the young women noticed him, and many of the passengers, disbelieving that either of the two beautiful young women had anything to do with the strange adventure of the night before, made him feel the contempt they had for him.

The Chief himself met him at the pier. He came forward in his silent, unobtrusive manner, and clasped Stevens by the hands. But his face was as telltale as a mask.

"Got your wireless," he said crisply, as he drew Stevens aside. "We've found the submarine! Found it at the pier this morning."

"Good!" exclaimed Stevens, his face lightening for the first time. "Did you catch the whole crowd?"

"No, none of them. We sent out a fleet of patrol boats the moment your wireless came, but the gang had too much of a start. We found the old hull beached and scuttled. Not a scrap to trace 'em by. We found the buoy—snow white, no marking—neatly ripped; and the diamonds—four hundred thousand dollars' worth of 'em, without counting the duty—whisked away, God knows where. The smugglers jumped an automobile. A couple of people saw it, know it was a dark touring-car. But that's not much of a clue."

"But—your tracers may——"

"Yes, they may—and probably won't. We may trace the buyers of the submarine. But ten chances to one it was done through clever dummies. It was a Hamilton, old model. There are a dozen of them that were used for experimenting and were dis-

carded. No, our one clue is the women. What about 'em?"

Tersely Stevens explained all that had occurred. As he described the sudden appearance of the submarine and the manner in which the prize had been snatched from the waves, almost within their reach, the Chief bit his lip till it blanched.

Stevens had never heard him swear, and he wished that for once the other had let an oath escape.

After an interminably long time, it seemed to Stevens, he reached over and patted him on the shoulder.

"Well, my boy, you did your best," he said. "None of us could have done better."

Then his gray eyes hardened to glinting steel.

"Where are the young women?" he asked.

Their initial being the same, their baggage was in the same baggage heap on the Customs pier.

The chief crossed over. Each of the young women had been met by an elderly woman, refined and tastefully dressed.

Miss Marshall in an animated manner was describing to her mother, apparently, the manner that she had been insulted, and Miss Moore, more quietly, was telling of her own humiliating experiences.

Closely the Chief eyed both. Then silently he himself examined the baggage. During the entire time—and he took plenty of it—consumed by his deliberate search, neither showed anything but a sort of resigned impatience.

When he had finished and had found nothing suspicious, he questioned them mercilessly, with the same result. He took their addresses and then summoned two men to shadow them.

For a while the Chief paced up and down the long platform.

"I am as puzzled as you are," he said, turning back to Stevens. "At first, I was convinced that both were in it. But on second thought, it is impossible to find two women so clever."

"One I am convinced is innocent, though it is possible that she may have been made an unconscious dupe by the clique. You know the gang is very powerful, both financially and socially, and it would have been very easy to have secured some one to send a relative with the same initials on the same ship.

"When you have studied female crimi-

nals a long time, you find that they can not work well in unison, and sooner or later one of them drops her pose during the questioning of the other. Stevens, I am satisfied that one is innocent. I first intended to take both in custody. But I can't do it, and we haven't a shred of evidence that allows me to take either one.

"But—" and his jaws closed in a determined way—"I am going to find her, if it takes the whole Service. She is too clever to be free."

Stevens wondered and doubted. He had seen her—he knew not which—conceal her identity, confuse him with the utmost adroitness, and then elude him at the very moment when he seemed to be on the point of trapping her.

No doubt she had planned her escape through to the end just as ingeniously.

"I don't think we'll ever find her out," said Stevens.

The Chief looked at him and said nothing. Then, noticing that the young women were leaving for the elevator at the end of the pier that would take them to the street, he signaled with a slight motion of the head to two neatly dressed, prosperous-looking young men.

Unobserved, their shadowers followed them into the car. Attracted perhaps by the gaze of both Stevens and his superior, the young women looked over and their eyes met for a moment. Their glance was cold, hard, baffling.

Then the heavy bronze doors closed slowly upon them.

"—— it, which is she?" snapped the Chief irritably.

And somehow Stevens felt relieved.



A Case of Reversion

by George
Shepherd

JULY, 1873, on the edge of the Khivan Oasis. Looking back to the east, one's eyes rest on the pleasant vista of the rich gardens of the Oxus, a comfortable prospect of fertile, well stocked farm lands. Wheat fields, melon patches, peach orchards and vineyards blend into a landscape which

proves how easily plenty and prosperity are won on the banks of the Oxus. Of human habitation one sees only here and there a few low, mud-walled, thatch-roofed huts, the occasional dwellings of a people whom no richness of soil can wean from the habits of a thousand years of nomad life.

Stretching out to the west is Space, vast

and limitless; an unbounded, untracked expanse of softly undulating desert that reaches away to the heat-quivering horizon, and from that horizon to the next, and so on through countless more to the distant Caspian Sea.

For fifty generations this empty, masterless land has been the home of the wild, masterless clans of the Yomud Turkomans. They have roamed over it from one distant well to the next, carrying with them their families and household goods and gods, unrestrained, unrepresed, owing allegiance to no man and obeying no laws but their own tribal customs.

They are wild, ruthless and cruel; but not treacherous. Love and loyalty they know, for each tribe honors and is true to its own women, children, elders and horses. Nor, indeed, should the horses come last. The Turkoman has the same pride in and affection for the wonderful clean-limbed animal which carries him over the unmeasured desert as he has for his own offspring.

But today there runs back through the farm lands a league-wide strip of blackened smoldering devastation, left behind by the eight companies of Russian infantry and the eight *sotnias* of Cossacks that are drawn up on the edge of the desert. In front of them swarm a cloud of Turkoman horsemen who gallop back and forth across the plain, firing their flint-locks, yelling and sometimes riding forward and taunting the invaders to single combat. But the most dashing Cossack would have a sorry chance on his worn-out mount against one of these desert riders on his matchless horse; so the officers hold the men in the ranks.

Disappearing into the desert beyond the Turkoman horsemen can be seen an indistinguishable mass of old men, women, children, horses, camels, sheep, goats and cattle, all rushing off in wild, frightened confusion.

Presently a few hundred of the Turkomans gather into something like a coherent mass in front of one Russian flank. A white-uniformed officer rides out in front of a *sotnia*.

"*Gotoval!* (Charge!)" he shouts, and the *sotnia* gallops forward boot to boot in the irresistible, ordered charge of disciplined cavalry. They ride a quarter of a mile and, in a cloud of dust, they reach the spot where the mass had been; but there is no shock of horse against horse, nor ring of saber on

saber. There, a hundred yards away, are the Turkomans, their horses cantering lightly off with easy, springy bounds, while the riders jeer and taunt their slow-moving enemy. One might as well use a sledge hammer to annihilate wind-blown feathers.

The whole Russian line begins to move slowly and steadily forward, while the horsemen dash yet more wildly to and fro in front of it, always receding, but still giving ground slowly enough to cover the retreat of the fleeing mass of their non-combatants. Finally the Russians reach a broad, dry canal with steep banks.

Here they come on a dozen abandoned *arbas*, or carts. They are full of carpets, cushions, cooking-utensils, threshed wheat, spun silk and clothing. Some of the men stop to loot. Sitting on a heap of rugs in one of the carts they find a six-year-old child, looking with curious eyes on the strange scene. In his face is not a sign of fear, and as a flapping banner goes by he crows and laughs.

"He is offering his allegiance to the Czar, nothing less," calls out a lieutenant of infantry. "Ho, there, sergeant! Take the child and see that he is fed and cared for. If we never catch those devils there, we will make at least one Russian subject on this campaign. And catch them we never will as long as they have their horses."

So little Ak-Umar became a Russian and was renamed Ivan. He was taken to Riga. There he grew up and married, had a child and died. All his life he was nothing but a dock laborer, an unthinking, sluggish beast of burden. But his child—



TO YOUNG Ivan Ivanoff, like his father a dock laborer in Riga, there came one day a man who was recruiting laborers for the sugar plantations of Hawaii. Ivanoff was twenty years old, strong, healthy and, one would have judged, inexpressibly stupid. The hours of his life which had not been passed in back-breaking toil had been spent in crowded tenements. Never had he been alone.

Think what that means. Imagine, if you can, what it would mean never to have a minute, sleeping or waking, when you were not in contact with—in the almost literal sense of the word—other people, and people who were not at all of your choosing. Yet that is the way Ivanoff lived. And there are plenty more like him.

The sorriest broken-down dray horse has had more of pleasure in his life than had Ivanoff when he had rounded out his first score of years; for horses are foaled in the country, and pass their colt-hood in green fields where they have room to kick up their heels and frolic when they like.

The labor agent said to Ivanoff:

"Will you go on a big steamer to a country farther away than America? There you will find easy work, good wages, and plenty to eat. The company will pay your way, provide a doctor for you when you are ill, and give you a suit of clothes."

Ivanoff appeared to consider for a moment. The idea of bettering himself made little appeal to him, for what measure had he by which to reckon the hardness of his lot? But still something—perhaps the fifty generations of nomads back of him—made him say:

"Yes, I'll go. When does the steamer leave?"

When the emigrant steamer reached Honolulu the laborers were put in a well ordered, very sanitary and overcrowded camp to be kept until they could be distributed among the various plantations. By virtue of well meaning contract-labor laws, theoretically they were free agents; so before they could be drafted to an estate each man had to go through the form of giving his consent. One morning the agent of the Alakea Plantation was picking up the number of men who had been allotted to him, and coming to Ivanoff he said to him through an interpreter:

"I will give you eighteen dollars a month and your quarters to come and work in the fields on my plantation. It's a sort of a big farm, you know," he explained.

"A farm—fields," replied Ivanoff with a perplexed look on his dull face. "What are they?"

The interpreter laughed, and so did the agent when he heard Ivanoff's words.

"Come along," he said. "We can't use any gutter sweepings. Queer-looking fellow, though. He doesn't look much like the rest of these Russians."

So instead of going to a plantation Ivanoff went to work in an iron foundry in the city of Honolulu. Not yet was he to learn that there exist in the world stretches of land that are not crowded by man.

The slums of a small city are often just as densely packed, just as foul and just as

deadly in stifling the growth of vigorous manhood as those of the greatest metropolis. Ivanoff's life was no better than it had been in Riga, and his soul was no less thickly overlaid with the noxious crust that grows in the tainted air where are huddled the scum and the dregs of humanity.

His work was hard and his hours were long. To this he was accustomed, but now there came a new oppression. Ivan, of course, understood no word of English, and by foremen, superintendents and other petty tyrants his failure to understand orders was often mistaken for unwillingness to obey, or for laziness, insubordination, or general perverseness. So the poor boy was bullied and browbeaten, and, worst of all, laughed at.

He had been used to authority—had accepted it as inevitable and natural; but this new manner of it, this domineering, uncomprehending arrogance, slowly began to fester in his unawakened soul. In his dull, stupid way he became vastly resentful, though he scarcely had the wit to realize it himself.

"Put that barrel of cement on a truck and take it over there. Sharp now!" said a foreman to him one day.

Ivanoff shook his head to show he did not understand and tried to ask the foreman what he meant, gesticulating violently to make his words more clear. The foreman misunderstood the halting words and was frightened by the waving hands.

"I'll teach you to make a move like that at me!" he shouted, and felled Ivanoff with a spanner.

The affair was seen by one Serovatsky, a ferret-faced, half Americanized little Russian who was an assistant timekeeper in the foundry. That evening when the whistle blew, Serovatsky met Ivanoff at the gate and walked home with him. The little man was very sympathetic.

"It is the brutality of the tyrant you have had visited on you," he said.

"Yes," admitted Ivanoff, feeling his head.

"But after all," went on Serovatsky, "it is but a piece of the whole vicious system; but a single efflorescence of the whole organized politico-capitalistic conspiracy that exists for the purpose of oppressing the masses. A conspiracy that owes its power only to the fact that the men who are the real producers and the sources of its wealth—men like you and me, Ivanoff—

are supinely willing to obey its orders."

"I would have obeyed him," said Ivanoff, "only I did not understand him. He should not have struck me."

Serovatsky restrained an exclamation of impatience.

That night in his room he carefully hunted through a pile of pamphlets and leaflets, badly printed and on cheap paper, until he found one in Russian entitled, "Convincing Arguments to Be Addressed to Those of Limited Intelligence." This he read with deep absorption.

The next day when work was over Serovatsky treated Ivanoff to a glass of beer at the sordid little saloon across the street from the foundry. Then he suggested taking a walk. Ivanoff was tired and said so.

"Nevertheless, you had better come. There are things of importance I would show you," said Serovatsky.

Ivanoff, thinking that perhaps it might mean another glass of beer, consented.

Serovatsky led the way out of the district of squalid, tumble-down houses packed with Japanese, Chinese, Russians, Portuguese, Hawaiians and the mixtures of all of them, through a street of cheap shops and finally out to a region where the streets were broad and well tended and the houses large and far apart.

Presently he stopped before a big stone house with deep, cool-looking verandas and yellow-striped awnings over the windows. It was set back beyond a wide expanse of smooth green lawn which was broken here and there with rare and beautiful tropical plants and flowering shrubs. A driveway lined with scarlet-flecked hibiscus bushes led from the street to the house and then back to the stable and garage in the rear. From a group of people somewhere on a veranda came the sound of voices, laughing and light-hearted; the voices of people to whom food and shelter come as a matter of course.

"Look," said Serovatsky, as they stopped in front of the house. "Look well."

"Yes," said Ivanoff, "I see. It is a palace."

"The man who lives there," went on Serovatsky, "never works. Yet he has all of everything he wants. Always there is enough to eat. Vodka he has as much as he likes. He has but to hold up his finger, and that which he desires is brought to him.

"If at night he drinks too much, in the morning there are servants to bathe his head with ice. Clothes of the finest linen and silk he has in such numbers that never need he wear a garment twice. He never works. He has never known what it is to be tired and hungry as have you and I, Ivanoff. Yet he never works."

"Yes," said Ivanoff.

"And to whom do you think all these things he enjoys belong?"

Ivanoff shook his head stupidly. Such a question seemed quite senseless.

"To you and to me and to all the others whose life-blood he drains," said Serovatsky. "The man who lives there is the owner of our foundry—the foundry where we work and he does not. What right has he to all of that luxury, to all the food and drink and clothes which we earn for him?"

"But you said that he was the master," said Ivanoff.

Serovatsky stamped angrily.

"But can't you see that he does not work? He has no right to be master and enjoy the fruits of our work."

"I don't understand," replied Ivanoff. "He is the master, is he not?"

Serovatsky changed his tactics.

"Do you realize," he asked, "that if it weren't for that man and others like him we would be free? We would work less and eat more. We would live in houses like that and do as he does. We who work would reap the benefits, instead of their going to him who has no right to them. Think what it would be to live as he does."



IVANOFF gazed stupidly at the house, but his mind could not rise to such dizzy heights. As he looked a groom led a horse up from the stable. A beautiful, clean-limbed thoroughbred it was, with its breeding showing in every line from its alert, cocked-forward ears to its trim hoofs which it put down as daintily as if it were a pretty girl in a ballroom.

A young man in riding-clothes came out the front door and, as the groom held a stirrup, he swung on the horse's back. The groom jumped away and the horse bounded forward, sending the gravel flying from under its feet. Then it steadied down to a springy canter, its slender legs moving swiftly and gracefully under its clean barrel and arched neck.

As horse and rider passed a short ten feet

away from him, the dull stupidity vanished from Ivanoff's face, and in its place came a gleam of something else. Though he did not know it, his ancestors had ridden horses like that for a thousand years.

"Even like that you would be," said Serovatsky as the horse and rider disappeared down the street.

"I do not understand clearly," said Ivanoff. "Explain to me how it would come to pass."

Serovatsky, though crack-brained, was tremendously in earnest, and his system of social philosophy was a fetish on which he lavished all the enthusiastic worship which his warped soul could compass. He was almost a fanatic—but not quite. He still retained a thoroughly normal respect for his own skin and a desire to keep it intact. But otherwise he was willing to go to any length to advance the Cause.

And now, through the medium of the clumsy-witted Ivanoff, he felt that he might be able to fulfil a long-cherished dream and yet live to continue his warfare on the "tyrants." There lacked only the conversion of Ivanoff.

The little man was clever in a petty sort of way, and he put his heart in the task; so in two weeks he had Ivanoff's slow-moving brain pretty thoroughly stirred up. By sticking to the concrete and hammering away Serovatsky had begun to make him feel that he was indeed a downtrodden victim.

Strangely enough, the idea that the new era would bring him food and drink and luxuries of all kinds in heaping measure had little persuasive effect with Ivanoff. But that he would be free to do as he liked, that he would be his own master and live unrestrained, unrepressed, owing allegiance to no man and obeying no law; it was this half understood thought which awakened strange thrills in him. And it was this that enabled Serovatsky to bring him almost to the frame of mind where he could use him.

Serovatsky had to hasten, for the need was pressing. So one Sunday he got Ivanoff half drunk and took the last step. In the back room of a foul-smelling, filthy little saloon, Serovatsky, quite sober, said to Ivanoff, half fuddled:

"The time of this tyranny is coming to an end. Freedom approaches. Every day it is brought closer by the labors of a band of devoted heroes. Will you join that band, Ivanoff?"

"And what do they do?" asked Ivanoff.

"They make away with the chief tyrants and thus terrify the others until they grant our demands."

"Make away with them—how?"

"By killing them."

"In fighting?"

"Yes—in a way." And Serovatsky explained the anarchistic theory of bombs and assassinations.

"But that is murder," said the stupid Ivanoff.

"It is justice," asserted Serovatsky. "And each tyrant struck down is a heroic blow for the liberation of the slaves. Even here in this country there are such blows to be struck. Listen.

"Next week there comes one who is the Minister of War. It is he who is lord and master of these thousands of soldiers who are kept on the island only to hold us in subjection and permit the tyrants to rob us. A blow at him, and the world will travel many leagues on the road to liberty. To some one will be given the chance to strike it. Would you like to be the one, Ivanoff?"

"I would fight him," said Ivanoff; "but not murder him. And how can I fight him when he will be surrounded by soldiers?"

Serovatsky argued no more. I said before he was clever. He was also patient, and soon his patience was rewarded.

 THREE days later Barclay Cuthbert, who owned, among other things, the foundry where Ivanoff and Serovatsky worked, paid it a visit of inspection. While walking around the place, looking into all sorts of details and asking many questions, he came across Ivanoff standing idle for a moment.

"Who are you and what do you do?" he asked him.

Ivan shook his head to show he did not understand and Cuthbert turned to his Superintendent.

"Any one here who speaks his language?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the Superintendent, and sent for Serovatsky.

"Ask him," said Cuthbert to the little timekeeper, "who he is and what his job is. Ask him if he gets along all right without speaking English."

"Ivanoff," said Serovatsky, "the master wants to know why you are not working."

"The foreman told me to wait here until he came back," said Ivanoff.

"The man says, sir," said Serovatsky, "that he has worked enough today; that he works only when he feels like it, and now he feels more like resting."

"Tell him he'd better get busy if he wants to keep his job," said Cuthbert sharply.

"The master says," Serovatsky said to Ivanoff, "that you are an idle, worthless fellow and that he will have you beaten if you are not careful."

"But tell him," protested Ivanoff, "that I am only waiting to be told what to do."

"He says, sir," translated Serovatsky, "that he won't work and that you—Must I translate it, sir?"

"Exactly what he said," jerked out Cuthbert grimly.

"That you are a——" Serovatsky mumbled an unmentionable epithet.

Cuthbert, although he did not make his living by physical labor and was, according to Serovatsky, coddled in the enervating lap of luxury, was nevertheless a red-blooded, two-fisted man. He did not indulge in too much vodka of an evening, but on the contrary kept himself in first-class trim. Therefore, with a right good will and considerable skill, he gave the astounded Ivanoff a very thorough beating.

That night Serovatsky found Ivanoff in his tenement.

"Now do you think we should fight these brutes as if they were men?" he asked him.

"No," said Ivanoff. "Any way at all is good enough for them."

"Are you ready to do your share?"

"Yes," said Ivanoff.

"Very well, then. Now listen carefully. The chief of them all, the War Minister, arrives the day after tomorrow. At ten o'clock in the morning of that day he leaves his hotel to go to one of the forts. You stand on the corner near the door—I will show you the spot.

"When he steps into his automobile you throw into his lap a little toy which we have already prepared. Then—*boom!* One more tyrant is answering for his sins, and the slaves all over the world have advanced another step toward liberty. And in the confusion and terror you worm your way out through the crowd and no one knows who did it.

"Risk? Yes, there is, of course; but are you not a brave man? So tomorrow you go

back to the foundry and get the pay that is due you. Spend the day in prayer for the delivery of your fellow slaves, and in the evening we will go over the final details. But, Ivanoff——"

"Yes."

"Promise me that tomorrow you will not drink anything but water."

"I promise."

"Promise, too, or rather swear, that if anything should go wrong and you should be caught—though there is little chance of it—that your lips will be sealed. For if the tyrants could, they would exterminate all of us who oppose their will.

"And that they must not do. Our lives are too valuable to the Cause to be wasted when it can be prevented. So therefore each one of us runs the risk for himself alone. When good fortune sends me my turn I do the same, and no news of my brothers shall be learned from me."

"That also I promise, and swear if you like," said Ivanoff. "If they catch me and kill me, it will not help me in my grave to have you lying in the same burying-ground."

Serovatsky rested content. He knew what a promise meant to the dull-witted Ivanoff.

Next morning, after Ivanoff had drawn his pay and spent an hour in darning his socks and putting his few clothes in order, he became restless. He was bored, perhaps, if that term can be applied to such a clod as he. Whatever the proper word to describe his state of mind, the effect of it was that he went out and roamed aimlessly through the streets. He began to feel that his promise not to drink was a great and unjust deprivation, though it did not occur to him to break it.

After a while he came to the railroad station. Now Ivanoff had, of course, seen a railroad before, or as much of it as may run through a city, but in all his life he had never ridden on a train; and just as he blundered into the station a train was about to leave. His restlessness culminated in a burst of adventurous curiosity, and he got aboard it. Buying a ticket beforehand was, of course, a formality beyond his ken, and when the conductor came to collect his fare their lack of ability to understand each other resulted in Ivanoff's paying his way to the end of the run.

In the same car was a sprinkling of soldiers, and seeing them, Ivanoff began to

think of what was going to happen the next day. He wondered what the man he was going to kill looked like. He felt a tinge of regret that he would not be able to speak to him first and tell him why he was dying, and that he, Ivanoff, the downtrodden slave, was killing him.

But then he felt the places which were still sore and hurting from his horribly unjust and brutal beating, and his regret vanished. He wondered a little if he would be able to get away, but was not greatly worried; for nothing, either in his inheritance or his environment, had ever taught him to put a high value on individual human life—not even his own. Finally he was brought back to his present surroundings by seeing that the train had stopped at a station where every one was getting off. Evidently it went no farther, so Ivanoff got off too.

As he stepped down on the platform his breath came a little more quickly and he was conscious of a strange, invigorating tang in the air. It was like that he had breathed on the deck of the steamer, yet somehow it seemed drier and thinner and more life-giving. He looked about him.

What he saw was Space. To one side stretched away a vast, softly undulating plain that ended at the foot of a distant mountain range. On the other side the smooth, turf-covered prairie was interrupted for a little distance by the houses and tents of a cavalry cantonment, and then swept away to the distant horizon.

But the dwellings seemed very small and the people walking or riding about among them tiny. He had a feeling that after all they were only incidental and not to be noticed. But that tremendous sweep of open country! He stood still and took a long breath.

While the people from the train streamed away along the roads that led from the station, Ivanoff remained gazing at the strange world into which he had wandered. Presently an officer rode up on a dancing, dainty-footed thoroughbred. A few feet from Ivanoff he dismounted and looked about for a soldier to hold his horse. There was none near, so he called to Ivanoff—

"Will you hold him a minute, please?"

Ivanoff, understanding only the gesture, took the bridle, his nerves a-quiver. Scarcely knowing what he did, he reached up his hand to stroke the animal's muzzle—and it was with the slow, deliberate movement of a

man who is used to handling spirited horses.

When, the officer having come back, Ivanoff started to follow the crowd, his eyes were a little brighter, and his walk a little less shambling. The city, the foundry, the foul, crowded tenement, all seemed a long way off. He went along behind the others until he came to a great oblong field of carefully groomed turf across which were scampering a lot of ponies with bright-shirted riders.

On the sides of the field were gathered many hundred people, and through them Ivanoff edged his way to see what was happening. And what he saw was wonderful and enthralling. He did not know that he was watching a polo game between the cavalry regiment and a crack team from one of the other islands, but he did know that it was good to watch the nimble-footed little animals galloping about, twisting, turning, checking suddenly, weaving in and out, and then joining in a mad, headlong rush the length of the field.

Fascinated, he pressed forward to the side boards; and once when the ball was knocked out of bounds near where he stood he narrowly escaped being ridden down as one of the players broke through the quickly scattering crowd. But though horse and rider grazed his shoulder as they went plunging past, it did not occur to him to be afraid.



IVANOFF could not follow the details and intricacies of the game, but no polo enthusiast ever watched an international championship match with more enraptured eyes. It was enough to see the swift, eager ponies and their reckless riders without bothering one's head with what it was all about.

One man came racing by on a beautiful iron-gray pony, caught the ball a back-handed stroke, checked too sharply, and man and horse went sliding and rolling over the ground together. There was a sudden catching of breath in the crowd and a chorus of horrified exclamations, but Ivanoff did not change expression, though when the man scrambled to his feet and remounted, he smiled approvingly. He was glad he had not been killed, though if he had been, it seemed to Ivanoff, it was all a part of the game—or the fight, he was not quite certain which it was.

When the game was over some magnet drew Ivanoff to the picket line where were

tethered the mounts of the visiting team. He stood near by and watched the grooms rubbing the ponies' trim, slender legs, washing their mouths and leading them up and down while they cooled.

With the seasoned ponies which had been ridden in the game were half a dozen green ones that had never yet been played. It was the custom of the island team to bring their young horses, which were still being schooled, to the matches, and let them stand with the old hands at the side of the field, in order that they might grow accustomed to the crowd and the noise and the general excitement in the air.

Among these was one named Gunpowder, a pony which was at once the joy and despair of his owner. No more nearly perfect polo pony was ever foaled, he used to tell his friends. He had the speed of a rifle bullet, the quickness and agility of a mongoose, intelligence enough to play the game without calling on his rider for constant direction, and the courage to rush unflinchingly into the nastiest of *mêlées*. But to all these virtues he added one supreme vice. He did not like to be ridden.

In fact, most of the time he would not be ridden. His master's knowledge of Gunpowder's capabilities had been gained on occasions when the pony had first been reduced to complaisant exhaustion by an hour's hard work on the longe. Tired out, he had proved himself a wonder. What he would be when fresh no one knew, for the one time he had been tried without the preliminary wearing-out process the man who attempted it had his collar bone broken in the first few seconds.

Ivanoff with unerring eye selected Gunpowder as the object of his most particular admiration. He worked his way to the front of the enlisted men and hangers-on who were clustered about the horses, and came so close that he could almost touch the smooth black coat of the beautiful little horse. There he stood worshiping, and showing the worship in his face.

Now if the island team had not won the match, and if half way through it the head groom had not begun to celebrate the victory with a bottle of square-face gin, what follows could never have happened. But Fate in this case had taken some trouble to lay her plans. The head groom saw the strange, heavy-faced Russian looking at Gunpowder with rapt eyes.

"Hello, there, Russki," he said jovially. "Some horse, what?"

Ivanoff, guessing the import of the remark, nodded solemnly. Then there came into the groom's head a gin-inspired impulse to play what might be an amusing practical joke. He should have been discharged for even thinking of it, for it is not good for a spirited horse to be used as a means to play practical jokes on ignorant Russian laborers. But the groom did not remember that just then.

"How'd you like to ride him?" he asked Ivanoff, making his meaning clear with signs.

Ivanoff nodded again and his eyes lit up. Surely he must be dreaming, but he had no wish to awake.

"Hi, there, one of you fellows! Give me a saddle," the groom shouted to his understrappers. "While the bosses are over at the club tankin' up we'll have a little sport of our own, beginning with some circus riding by our cow-faced Russian friend."

The other grooms, the soldiers and all the rest of the crowd chuckled with delight and cast anxious glances across the field to the officers' club to make sure that there was no one watching. The groom quickly threw a light saddle on the horse and slipped a bridle with an easy snaffle over his head. He had just enough sense remaining not to use a bit with which an unskilful, heavy-handed man might ruin the animal's mouth. Then he led the horse out in the open.

"Come here," he said to Ivanoff. "And you," he called to another groom, "hold him down on the off side. We want to let our friend get fair in the saddle."

So while the pony was held on each side Ivanoff mounted. Apparently he did it clumsily. Yet he did not flop down in the saddle with any sudden bump to set the horse's highly strung nerves on edge, and his legs took their hold on the flanks very gently and smoothly.

If Ivanoff had been embracing a woman he loved he would not have done it roughly or boisterously; and no woman had ever awakened in him such strange, delicious thrills as did this wonderful animal on whose back he found himself. Not being afraid, he saw no reason to yank and pull at the horse's head, so he grasped the reins lightly, and achieved instinctively just that inimitable touch on the bit that gives the rider control without annoying the horse. The

groom stepped back and waited for the circus performance to begin.

Gunpowder, being only a horse, could not reason, but his instinct (remember the derivation of the word "horse sense") told him there was something altogether friendly about the man on his back. He had a feeling that not a hair of his body would be harmed.

For an instant he stood still. He stretched his neck out and pawed at the ground tentatively, and Ivanoff gave him his head to do it. That was beginning well, thought Gunpowder. So he began to walk forward with light, mincing steps, and in a moment broke into an easy canter. As he bounded over the smooth, firm ground, headed for the open prairie, and showed no signs of beginning the circus, the head groom shouted frantically for Ivanoff to come back; but in vain. Gunpowder lengthened his stride to a gallop, and with every leap his speed increased. In another hundred yards he was racing off to the mountains as hard as he could run.

Only one who has himself sat on a horse as it gallops at top speed over open country can realize what Ivanoff felt. To no man yet has been given the power to describe that glorious sensation with mere words, and it were pitiful for me to attempt it.

Gunpowder, unrestrained by his rider, ran as only a horse with racing-blood can run. The rapid, rhythmic thuds of his hoofs rang in Ivanoff's ears, he felt the swift play of bone and muscle under him, his own pulse kept time to the sharp breaths coming from the horse's distended nostrils, the wind whipped in his face and, above all, the wild, irresistible speed of it set his blood on fire.

And Ivanoff had never been on a horse before in his life. But remember that the faster a horse goes the easier it is to sit it—if one only is not afraid. And who was he that he should fear? Do you think that forty years of foul, noisome, crowded cities can undo the work of a thousand years of untrammelled desert life? Do you think it can make a man in whose veins runs the blood of hundreds of wild horsemen afraid of a horse?

As he raced wildly over the plain, Ivanoff, the son of Ivan the dock laborer and slum dweller, died; and there was re-born in his body the son of Ak-Umar, the child of a dozen Turkoman chiefs. He shouted; he threw away his cap; he reached

forward and stroked his horse's neck, and presently, as his speed slackened a little, he began to swing around in wide circles—just as his ancestors had swung their horses around the stolid Russian squares.



OVER on the club veranda Donald MacIntyre, owner of Gunpowder, of hundreds of other horses and of twenty thousand acres on which they pastured, was drinking something fizzy from a tall glass when his eye caught a rapidly moving speck out on the plain.

"I wonder who that crazy fool is out there," he remarked casually. "Give me your glasses, Bob, and let's take a look."

He focused the binoculars, looked through them a few moments and then put them down with an exclamation.

"It's Gunpowder!" he shouted. "And who it is that can ride him like that, I'd like to know. He's got him under control and is doin' stunts with him. And that horse hasn't been ridden for a month!"

He jumped up and ran over to the picket line, followed by his own team and half a dozen officers.

"Who's on Gunpowder?" Macintyre asked the head groom.

"It's some Russian who said he was a horse trainer, sir," the groom lied glibly. "He said he could ride 'im, so I let 'im try. I know I shouldn't have done it, sir," he ended meekly.

"Did he have any trouble at the start?" asked Macintyre.

"No, sir; the little devil walked off with 'im like a lamb."

Before long Ivanoff came cantering back, bare-headed, face aglow, and speaking eager, rapid Russian into Gunpowder's ear. MacIntyre went up to him and stood by the horse's head while he dismounted.

"Who are you?" he asked.

Ivanoff smiled and shook his head.

"Oh, there, you ex-Russian attaché!" called Macintyre to one of the group of officers. "Come here and let's see if you really can speak the lingo. Ask him," he said as a young Captain came forward, "where he learned to ride like that."

Captain Simpson put the question and looked astonished at the reply he received.

"He says," he translated, "that he's never ridden a horse before."

"Tell him to stop lyin'," said MacIntyre.

"No," said the Captain after a little more

talk with Ivanoff, "he strikes me as telling the truth. He says he works at a foundry in town."

"Well," said MacIntyre, "I don't care who he is, or what he is, or whether he knows one end of a horse from the other, he's sure got a God-given instinct for handling 'em. Ask him if he wants a job on my ranch."

Captain Simpson explained.

"Is it like this?" Ivanoff asked, his eyes sweeping over the prairie. "And are there horses there?"

"Thousands of them."

"Tell him yes. I'll come."

X THAT night Serovatsky waited in his own quarters for an hour after the time Ivanoff had promised to come. Then he went to look for him.

He found Ivanoff sitting on his cot in the room he shared with three other men. None of these was in and Ivanoff was alone. His elbows rested on his knees, his hands supported his chin, and he was looking off

into infinite space, on his face the rapt expression of one listening to music too divine for human instruments.

Serovatsky's doubts were quieted.

"The clod has come to life," he thought. "Now he will dare anything."

"Ivanoff," he said softly from the open door, "Ivanoff, in thinking of the glory of it one must not forget the practical details. Come, it is time we made the final arrangements."

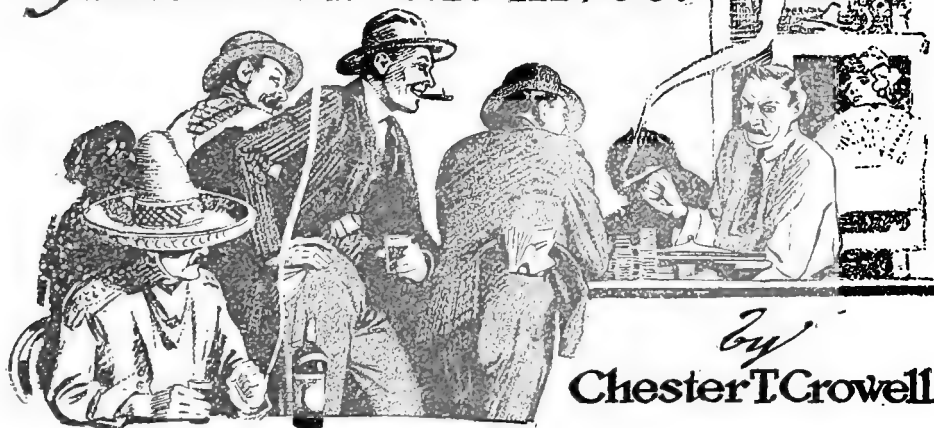
Ivanoff looked at him puzzled.

"Arrangements for what?" he said.

"Why, for the heroic deed you are to do tomorrow," said Serovatsky, surprised. "For the blow you are to strike for liberty. What else should it be?"

"Oh!" said Ivanoff. "I had forgotten. But you see, I can not do it now. At eight in the morning I leave in a steamship for another country not far from here where I go to work—no, not to work, for it is a place where there are many horses and wide fields. Let me tell you about it."

Jack and Louis Invest



Cy
Chester T. Crowell

SOME one wrote what he believed was a song, not many years ago, and called it "San Antonio." This incident is largely accountable for the discovery of the place and the ruin of as picturesque a supply of local color as this earth ever furnished. Now that the city is an excellent setting for society drama, it is crowded

with tourists looking for cowboys with horns.

Therefore we will forget the humdrum present and tell a tale of the good old days when blood was red instead of blue, and money was made to spend.

These were the good days before an order from the Governor of the State had forced emporiums where cool things that warm

the blood are sold to purchase doors, that they might close at midnight. This Governor has already been hanged in effigy; further comment on his act is out of place here.

It is true the days of gambling on the streets and plazas were over, but then one might list to the siren call of Chance almost anywhere else. The railroad pass was yet in its ascendancy, and persons who became the possessors of trifling little sums of a few thousand dollars from the sale of cotton or cattle usually found themselves caught by the undertow which passes swiftly by the bank door to form a delightful whirlpool in some place more suited to the demands of sociability.

Scattered throughout the civilized world—if there is any such thing—are a score of persons who positively know that on or about the fifth day of May, 1900, Jack Bremond had one thousand dollars in bank notes—not crisp bank notes, but worn and greasy bank notes. One of the purposes of this story is to demonstrate that a story can be told about bank notes without the bank notes being crisp.

There are mysteries about those bank notes—mysteries that neither Jack Bremond nor Louis J. Boileau ever divulge or discuss. One of the mysteries could be stated succinctly thus: Where did Jack get the bank notes? And the other succinctly thus: What did Jack do with the bank notes?



JACK was staff correspondent of the *Houston News*, and in San Antonio representing his paper. Louis was editorial writer for the *Morning Sun* of San Antonio. Both were descendants of the early French colonists of Texas, very much American, but with a recollection of their forefathers that made them picturesque figures.

Jack was small, gray as to hair, eyes and clothes, and matter-of-fact, with a memory like a Government bond; while Louis was tall, engaging and handsome, given to striking matinee-idol poses, possessor of a deep, rich voice upon which he played as other masters of sound use metal instruments.

The day before that eventful fifth of May, Jack and Louis stood in the little doorway of the old red sandstone building on Navarro Street from which the *Morning Sun* is issued, and looked about as cheerful as a cemetery on a rainy day.

"Well?" remarked Louis.

"Well, here's my pile," responded Jack, exhibiting three silver quarters. "Six bits, and we have to eat."

"We can't eat on that," Louis stated with finality.

"You had two dollars and a half last night," declared Jack, with a positiveness that left out of account the fact that it was not his money. "What did you do with it all?"

"Went to Room 21," Louis answered, "to see if I could win a roll. When they told me who was inside I just passed the two through a hole in the door and told 'em to divide it."

"Huh!" grunted Jack. "Why don't you draw on the business office?"

"My dear Jack, if they'd still let me I would."

"Well, let's sign a ticket somewhere."

"I've done that quite numerous, not to say enthusiastically and flamboyantly," responded Louis.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," Jack began, and Louis listened expectantly. "You go over to the Elite and order a big dinner with a couple of two-for-a-quarter cigars, and brandy; I'll step across to the Silver King, invest in the game and win enough for dinner."

"Will you do that?" exclaimed Louis; and then, thinking it over, he added, "But suppose you lose?"

"Well, but I don't dare to lose with the dinners ordered," Jack said reassuringly.

They stepped forth from the shade of the building and walked at a lively pace along Navarro Street, turning into picturesque and narrow old Commerce Street, following its windings to the Elite Hotel, into which Louis strode like a conquering hero while Jack, jingling his six bits, continued on to the Silver King. Jack lingered a moment in the barroom to agree upon a program of action.

The aged stone walls of the old building are decorated with pictures and little black smudges, here and there, which indicate where the pistol-balls of various persons who had disagreed about various matters lodged as said persons discussed the questions at issue.

Then he went upstairs and straight to the faro table, where he placed two bits on the jack of clubs. As he did so the arm of a mild-eyed, tubercular-looking bystander came forth and placed a similar amount on

the same card. Jack looked belligerently at the stranger.

"How do you play this game?" the stranger asked timidly.

"Just put your money on a card," Jack responded. "The dealer flips his deck and takes your money. Then you've played."

The stranger blinked. The dealer turned the cards and took charge of the money.

"See?" asked Jack, placing another two bits on the same card. The stranger did likewise. The cards were turned and again the money disappeared.

"Poor old Louis!" Jack groaned. "I'll bet he's sweated a whole Turkish bath."

Then he placed the last two bits on the same card and the stranger reached into his pocket for more money. Jack turned upon him, hair bristling and eyes flashing.

"Now you get out o' here," he gritted like the rumbling that preceded an earthquake. "When I get through you can play. Look what you've done to me already!"

The stranger gasped and withdrew to a respectable distance. The dealer turned the cards and the jack of clubs came up.

"I'll just pinch two bits and place the bet over here," remarked Jack, depositing the little stack of money on the king of spades. The cards were turned and the king of spades came up.

"See there?" Jack asked the stranger. "Now you can play; I'm going over to the crap game."

Fifty minutes later the exultant Jack hurried away from the Palace of Chance with a total of \$97.50 in his pocket. In his anxiety to rescue Louis from the throes of nervous prostration he forgot to smile as he entered the door of the café, and Louis, seeing a serious face, nearly fell out of his chair. Then Jack smiled a broad, sunshiny smile, and Louis felt chuckles and snatches of grand opera chasing themselves up and down his throat as planked steak and various accessories were borne to the table.

"Faro?" asked Louis.

"Uh-huh," grunted Jack.

"Bet you played the jack and king."

"Yeh."

"Ought to try the queen o' hearts some time."

"Not for mine; I never knew a dame in my life who wasn't sitting up nights framing up some way to separate a bully from his coin."

As they placed their napkins, Jack surveyed the feast.

"Ordered a regular gastronomic Marathon, didn't you?" he commented, smiling.

"I could eat a stewed elephant," was the rejoinder, as Louis began operations.



OVER coffee and cigars Louis proceeded to a discussion of the mysteries of the universe, only to be interrupted by a more mundane comment from his companion.

"Business certainly is picking up for me," mused Jack. "I'm going back there; this is my day sure. I've been winning all day."

"All day?" asked Louis, mystified.

"Sure; you know I had only a dime after breakfast this morning. Where do you suppose I got that six bits?"

"Where?" asked Louis, between puffs. Jack smiled.

"I rigged up a roulette wheel in the office," he said. "Numbered each blade of the electric fan and tied a string on one wire of the guard; started her off and let the printers make their bets; shut off the fan and where she stopped showed who won."

"Great scheme," Louis commented.

"Mr. Waiter," Jack called out, "order us a cab."

Two minutes later they climbed into the cab, rode one block to the Silver King and lined up in front of the roulette wheel, where a twenty-five-dollar bet lost, another won, and then a bet of one hundred dollars won, while Louis, who had been told to keep away, lost a few borrowed dollars at a crap table.

Stuffing the money in all available pockets, Jack ordered wine for the house, took Louis by the arm and led him to the cab.

"Things are sure looking up," he remarked between chuckles. "It's only four o'clock in the afternoon, and we've got a lot to do before we go to work in the morning."

Neither Jack nor Louis is exactly clear as to subsequent events. They once described the proceedings rather hazily as "going 'round and 'round," which is probably as accurately as they can be described. Anyway, there was a painful shortage of cab fare at five o'clock in the morning, when they found themselves near the old International & Great Northern Railway station, twenty billowy blocks from home.

Carefully picking safe places in the unsteady asphalt pavement they trudged along until they came to Milam Square, where, in the dim morning light, gardeners were arranging the products of their coöperation with nature. Louis stopped and looked longingly at the odorous array of fresh vegetables.

"Jack," he said pleadingly, "if I don't eat I can't walk another block."

Such a remark as that at a quarter past five o'clock in the morning, after a very busy evening, impressed Jack not humorously, but as being very serious. He also stopped and they pondered. After five minutes of pondering, which was really a painful effort, they began to search their pockets. Louis it was who discovered a dime.

Without waiting to shout the gladsome news he lunged forward and purchased two bunches of turnips. Sitting down on the curbstone, they cleaned their pocket knives of plug tobacco and began peeling turnips. Louis ate his ravenously. Jack plodded along stolidly, but with no less enjoyment. Then they continued the journey to Jack's modest room, where sleep pounced upon them uncourted, even though the bed did turn over a few times and threaten once to continue its start and go on through the little window.

At three o'clock in the afternoon Jack awoke with a start, jumped, then sat up and looked about him in a frightened manner. He seemed particularly attracted by the sight of his trousers draped ungracefully across the back of a chair. Then he moved one leg far over to the edge of the bed, and, cramping his muscles, plunged a toe into Louis's ribs with such enthusiasm that Louis awoke standing on the floor, reaching unsteadily toward the foot of the iron bed for support.

He, too, spied the trousers, and together they stalked toward those trousers, approaching warily, one from one side and the other from another. Pouncing upon them, Jack pulled a pad of bank notes out of the right hip pocket and counted them. Though the two were a bit unsteady on their legs the results of the count were the same—one thousand dollars. The pad had been forgotten during the festivities of the night before.

Together, that afternoon—the afternoon of May fifth, 1900, they stood in the editorial rooms of the *Morning Sun* and counted

that money again, where all might see and envy. They went back to the scene of yesterday's distress, the little doorway leading on to Crockett Street, and counted the money again, while Louis remarked that the bank notes seemed to be "very successful bank notes."

"Now, about investment," he said; "the money must be safely invested, and we will quit our wild ways."

Jack hastily stuffed the notes into his pockets without waiting to hear more, and they departed for the nearest restaurant. Over their afternoon breakfast of raw eggs and raw Hamburger steak Louis unfolded his scheme.

"You know Señora Carmen Guerrero Morelos y Cassiano viuda de Manchaca?" he began.

Jack nodded affirmatively.

"I've told you about her before," continued Louis. "Her name was Carmen Guerrero Morelos y Cassiano, but she married a man named Manchaca and the 'viuda' means widow. She's a widow. You know Mexican women keep their own names and just add the name of the husband. Well, here's the idea——"

"Yes, I know all about that. Why don't you marry her? She's rich," Jack interrupted.

"Well, now wait a minute. Yes, she's rich—why, that woman's got money she hasn't counted. But she's gone out to California to spend the Summer. Now, you know I'm not swell-headed, or anything, Jack, but she's foolish about me. But how can I get out to California?"

"I'll lend you the money," Jack hastened to answer.

"No, we won't do it that way. Here's the idea. I'll make a deal with you. You've got one thousand dollars minus this dinner check to invest, and you want to invest it right and make some money. Well, here's the idea.

"You let me have nine hundred and fifty of that coin. I'll go out to California and put on a Romeo-and-Juliet act and cop the widow. When I cop her I repay you five thousand of those useful little things. It's a sure shot, but if I should happen to lose we'll agree that I owe you five hundred dollars."

Jack thought it over.

"If you lose why don't you owe me nine hundred and fifty dollars?" he asked.

"Jack," Louis protested, "you never were a sport, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll match you right now for that other four hundred and fifty. Lend me a dollar."

Jack extended a dollar. They sent the coins spinning into the air, then each caught his and smacked it down on the palm of his left hand.

"You are matching me," Jack insisted.

"Yes."

They uncovered. Both coins showed "heads up."

"All right," said Jack, "here's the money." And he counted out nine hundred and fifty dollars, not forgetting the dollar with which they had matched.



LOUIS called the managing editor of the *Morning Sun* on the telephone.

"That you, Mack?" he asked. "Yes, this is Louis. Well, I wanted to tell you that I've got entirely too much money to work. I've resigned." Then he hung up the receiver. Mack, at the other end of the line, laughed, called the assistant editorial writer and told him to hold down both jobs "till Louis sobers up."

The resignation presented, Jack and Louis started toward the ticket office, where it was discovered the train would leave in two hours. There followed hasty preparations.

Scarcely had Jack returned from the depot to the hotel when a telegram came from Houston ordering him to go at once to Dallas. He congratulated himself as he read it on having recovered his dissipated expense money, for he could now take his baggage along. In high good humor he made preparations to leave.

At the end of the week he was still in Dallas, and took occasion to send a telegram of anxious inquiry to Louis. No answer came. Two days later another telegram to the chief clerk of the hotel brought an answer, collect, that Mr. Louis J. Boileau of Texas had departed for Denver one day after his arrival, saying he would return.

Jack brooded over his lost nine fifty and his faithless friend, until one night two weeks later the managing editor of the *Houston News* received the following telegram:

Left tonight for Denver; am witness in murder case.
JACK BREMOND.

Having been staff correspondent on the

News for more years than the oldest man on the paper could remember, Jack took liberties now and then. His arrival in Denver was followed by a weary search of hotel registers until finally he found the big, flowing signature of Louis J. Boileau, followed by the notation—Room 46.

"I wish to see Mr. Boileau," he addressed the clerk.

"I am sorry—he is ill; he doesn't wish to be disturbed," was the response.

"I know all about *his* illness; you'd have to throw the court house at him to hurt *him*!" Jack exploded. "He's got nine fifty of——"

"I'm sorry," the clerk began.

"You're going to be sorrier than that in a minute," Jack retorted.

"Front! Show the gentleman up to forty-six; here's a key." And the argument ended.

Sprawled across the bed, still wearing evening clothes, was the prostrate form of Louis; nor could the combined efforts of Jack and the bell boy win from him anything more substantial than a grunt.

"He been 'toxicated jes' like dat evah since he been heah," remarked the bell boy, "an' his weddin' all busted up an' let-tahs stackin' up eve'y day."

"Wedding all busted up?" repeated Jack.

"Yas, sah," continued the bell boy. "Was a Mexican lady—she sho' was a fine lady—come heah f'om Californy t' mah'y him, an' dah he was, 'toxicated. Sho' was awful; she like t' *died*. She done went home now."

Jack took the key from the door and departed. When he returned he was carrying under his arm a big plaster lion tamed for advertising purposes, and in the other hand a soap box. At the entrance to the door of Louis' room he stopped, and pulling out the key which he had picked up on the first visit, opened the door.

Mounting the lion on the bed beside Louis he placed the box on the floor close to the bed, pulled a package of fire-crackers out of his pocket and put them in the box. Then he wet a bath towel and covered the box with it.

Returning to his plaster lion, he released a spring. Immediately the lion was raising and lowering its head and mechanically shaking its tail. Jack touched a match to the fire-crackers, drew the wet towel across

the box and stepped into the doorway to observe results.

The sounds that resulted were entirely too unusual to fail of results. The drowsy Louis stirred, rolled over, opened his eyes and then sat upright with a start. At sight of the moving lion he gasped and tried to yell, but his throat was too parched. Jerking a suit-case from under the bed, he fumbled in it until he rolled over the edge of the bed on to the floor, alighting on the left kidney, principally.

The lion followed him. Sitting on the floor, Louis made one last frantic grab into the suit-case. His trembling hands clutched, then dropped, a pistol. Fearing he had not a moment to spare, Louis deserted the pistol and started madly for the door, where he ran into the arms of Jack. Then his knees gave way and he went slowly but surely, in spite of all the efforts of his creditor, on to the floor.

Jack was deliberate about his mirth. He sat down and laughed. For a full minute he roared, while Louis blinked at him to make sure that this inferno was not the product of fevered imagination. Recovering his equilibrium, Louis tried a brief laugh just to see if it would come out. That gave Jack a fresh start.

"Well, I suppose you think I owe you five hundred," Louis began, when the storm was over.

"I know good and well you do," Jack responded. "But what happened?"



"IT WAS like this," Louis began, as if explaining the most natural thing in the world. "I drove into California and met the lady. I was all fixed up for a regular Romeo-and-Juliet thing, but she goes to a clinch at first sight.

"Well, the wedding was scheduled; but being a widow, she wanted to fuss things up kittenish, so she plans an elopement. I come here to wait a week while she gives her friends the slip and rushes to my arms.

"Here I am, alone in a vast sea of life-saving stations, with money in my jeans, and the girl won, and nothing to do but meet the bartenders; which I proceeded to do, expecting, sure, to be there with bells on and my hair braided when the wedding bells tolled. But no, they can't wake me up; and back to California she goes and writes me letters—oh, such letters! calling

me something worse every day—till I just had to stay wet to recover and quit reading what she says I am."

"Well, I'm going back to Texas," Jack answered, "and if you don't mind I'll collect my five hundred."

"Have you got a roll? Can you fix passes for two?" Louis asked excitedly.

"Just keep that five hundred on your mind as you walk back," Jack admonished, as he started for the door. "I'm going to engage a berth. I'll be in San Antonio to meet you, if you ever get back, and collect that five hundred we invested."

"Oh, about that five hundred," Louis remarked in a conciliatory tone. "I must tell you about that. Señora Carmen's brother was hanging around here with a gun as long as your arm a few days ago, and I was in no humor to quarrel; so I just decided that if that *hombre* wanted to make chilli meat out of me he could do it.

"Then I thought of your five hundred and I just figured it this way: I've got an insurance policy for a thousand dollars. If I got shot I wanted you to have it, since I owe you money, but I didn't want any bother about it. I wanted to owe you that thousand or nothing, so I called in the clerk and we matched dollars to see whether I owed you the thousand or nothing——"

"The clerk!" Jack exclaimed.

"Why, of course. I couldn't send for you. Well, I won the little game; so that five hundred is off the books——"

"Not so you could notice it with the naked eye," his friend interrupted.

"Jack," Louis began with tragic seriousness, "you are a quitter. And just to show you that I am on the square, no matter how low you fall, I'll match you right now for that five hundred."

For answer Jack drew a dollar out of his pocket. Louis drew forth a quarter. Both showed "heads up."

"Now I'm through with you," Jack remarked, "and I'm going back to Texas. Have you any money at all?"

Louis exhibited his quarter and said nothing. He had known Jack a long time, so he waited patiently until the next morning when a letter came, inclosing railroad passes and Pullman ticket. Inquiry developed that his hotel bill had been paid.

When he climbed aboard the train it was to find that his pass called for the Pullman drawing-room, and when he

entered he found two large burlap sacks of fresh turnips in one corner. Moreover, Louis lived on them alone until he reached San Antonio.

His feelings were lacerated beyond repair. He told himself that Jack should not have coaxed him into this matrimonial muddle in the first place.

"Sober?" asked Mack when he returned.

"Of course I'm sober," protested Louis, pained by the insinuation.

"Where've you been?" asked Mack, without looking up from his desk.

"Been taking the turnip cure for the booze habit," replied Louis seriously.

"Turnip cure? What's that?"

"Well, you just eat nothing but turnips, that's all."

"You must think I've lost my memory if you're trying to make me believe you've been living on turnips," declared Mack.

"Well, I have just the same," calmly asserted Louis.

"Then you were broke."

"I was not."

"How much money did you have?"

"Two bits."

"What'd you spend it for?"

"Booze."

"Well, better get to work; your understudy is running into paralysis of the typewriter."

Louis adjourned to his room thankfully, without further explanation. Any time, however, that there was a chance to refer to the staff writer of the *Houston News* as a former Populist and a political agitator, he did it. In return, Jack would occasionally remark that while he named no names there was a certain person over in San Antonio who was a political pirate and Black-Hander, who had been known to get a poor workingman in debt to him and then feed him on one turnip a day.

In the patio of her magnificently furnished old rock house near Monterey, Señora Carmen Guerrero Morelos y Cassiano de las Casas, who was formerly "Viuda de Manchaca," remarks to her husband every few days that "all *Americanos* are *barbaros*, such brutes! Ugh!"

But none of them really means it.



The Gentility of Ikey Blumendall

by Talbot Mundy

THE best proof of what a pathetic-looking object Ikey was is that he wheedled a recruiting-sergeant and a doctor, and crept between the close-set prejudices of the British Army—a thing which neither bluff nor virtue could have accomplished for him. Recruit-

ing-sergeants are a keen-eyed brand of men, who recognize a Jew on sight and waste no time on him; and Army doctors have a knack—happy or damnable, according to the point of view—of finding more or less imaginary flaws in undesirables.

It was easier once for a Chinaman to

enter the United States than for a confessed Jew to enlist in the British Army. Nowadays, of course, things are rather different. It has become the fashion to be tolerant, and even the British Army follows fashion in some respects; but even today, Jews in the rank and file of his Britannic Majesty's forces are few and far between.

In spite of the fact that Jews put up the finest, doggedest, most desperate fight in history; although it was they, with none to help them, who held Titus and his engineers at bay, and—as if that were not enough—fought one another while they did it, there is a time-worn theory that the Jews do not make good soldiers. Perhaps the theory is right. Perhaps their imaginations are too keen, and their brains too active; and it is possibly true that they must be forced into a corner before they will put up any kind of offensive resistance.

But it is much more probable that the theory gained ground because few good Jews are ever in a case where they must enlist or starve. If they are good Jews, their own people will look after them; and if they are bad Jews, neither the Army nor anybody else has any use for them.

So it must be obvious at the very beginning of the story that a quite unusual train of circumstances brought Ikey Blumendall into the back room of a magistrate's court near Trafalgar Square, and set a cheaply bound copy of the Talmud in his left hand, and made him say, "So 'elp me God!" with his right hand held aloft, in answer to a cut-and-dried oath of allegiance to her Majesty the Queen.

The rain had something to do with it—the bitter-cold rain of February, and the fact that the recruiting-sergeant found time heavy on his hands that morning, and that he had a sense of humor. Then, too, Ikey was obviously hungry, and the sergeant quite obviously wasn't; and however keen-eyed and avaricious recruiting-sergeants may be—and they surely are keen-eyed—they are not necessarily without a certain kind of sympathy.

They may hide it, and they usually do; but they have it. And then, taking a would-be soldier in for examination precluded standing in the rain while the examination lasted. And there were other circumstances that had their birth much earlier but did not become patent until later on.



IKEY did not walk up to him; he slouched up, with his toes turned inward, and his hands deep down in the pockets of his cavernous and evil-fitting pants. His greasy bowler hat was rammed down on to his head until the rim of it pressed his ears down and outward like two brackets that supported it, and his pasty, unshaven face seemed drawn by hunger, and something more. His eyes, too, were bright with something more than curiosity. He looked comically helpless—a poor pathetic sparrow of a man, with half his feathers missing—shivering, bright-eyed and wistful in the February wind.

The sergeant smiled at him, and laid his head a little on one side, being very careful, though, that the cold rain should not drip off his cap down behind his coat collar. Ikey shrank himself yet a little farther toward the center of his dripping clothes, and squelched two paces nearer.

"Are them coats waterproof?" he asked.

"You bet they are!"

"Do they serve 'em out, or do you 'ave to buy 'em?"

"Every single man in the Line gets one as soon as he joins."

"Free?"

"Free, gratis, and for nothing!"

Ikey was evidently making up his mind, or screwing up his courage. It was perfectly evident that no man would stand there in the ice-cold rain and ask that kind of question for the sake of information.

"I think I'll join."

"You! It's the bread line you're looking for, Solomon. Down Northumberland Avenue there. Turn to your left at the bottom, and keep straight on along the Embankment. You'll see 'em all waiting there in line. Can't miss it!"

Ikey grinned, from sheer inborn natural politeness.

"You've got to 'ave your little joke, 'aven't you!" he answered, and the sergeant winced almost imperceptibly.

"Take me in out o' the wet!" said Ikey, in a voice that was mellow with cajolery. "You've got a coat, and I 'aven't. You're warm and I ain't. And, sergeant, listen 'ere! I'm 'ungry. So 'elp me, I'm 'ungry! I want a feed. 'Urry! Sign me up, or swear me in, or do what yer want; but do it quick afore I eats me trousers!"

The recruiting-sergeant shook his head. Ikey was pathetic, and his earnestness was

evident in his voice and attitude, but the unwritten regulations of the Service die infinitely harder than the written ones. Still, a uniform can only hide emotion; it can't abolish it. The sergeant dived into his pocket and held out his hand.

"Here's sixpence for you, Solomon. Cut along and eat!"

But Ikey shook his head. His hand shook at the same time, and not from cold; and that blue-cold nose of his, with the tell-tale curve above the nostril, snuffled once or twice.

"Uh-uh!" he grunted. "Keep it!"

The sergeant's chin went up. Sixpences were not so plentiful with him that he could regard his own offer of one as anything but an act of generosity, and its refusal as anything but insult. He was surprised and offended and incredulous in every fiber of his taut-strung being.

"What's your game?" he asked. "I thought I knew 'em all!"

"My game? I 'aven't got one; else why'd I want to join the Army? What was your game when you enlisted? Wanted to get in out o' the wet an' the cold, didn't yer? Well . . . same 'ere. Come on, take me along!"

"You? Why, you're a Yid!"

"Sure I'm a Yid! You're English, ain't yer? Never been 'ungry in your life, I'll bet; don't mind gettin' wet through and chilled to the bloomin' marrer; sort o' bloomin' tin god in a red uniform, what can't feel and 'asn't got no 'eart! Sure I know yer 'anded me a tanner! 'Ow'd yer like it if I was to 'and you one?"

"We don't want Jews in the Army!" said the sergeant stuffily.

"Don't want 'em, or don't take 'em—which?"

"Don't want 'em."

"It's — not bein' wanted! Still—see 'ere! Your job's coaxin' recruits, ain't it, at so much per? Coax me! I won't wear your throat out, nor my ears neither! 'Ave a try!"

 IKEY shook his head to rid the sopping brim of his bowler hat of some of its burden of melting sleet. Some of the spray went into the sergeant's face, but most of it went down Ikey's own neck. He seemed indifferent to it, though; he stood like a salesman, concentrated on the effort to dispose of the damaged, rain-soaked

goods he had to sell, and every movement that he made—every attitude he struck—every change of note in his rain-and-hunger-hoarsened voice was calculated to that end. It was all designed to be compelling; but though it missed the mark it was irresistible from other reasons.

"I'll take you in where you can warm yourself a while," said the sergeant, not unkindly. "There's a fire 'round in the office—and I don't know that there mightn't be some coffee."

Ikey fell into step beside him, and did his best to keep abreast; but the British Army quickstep was not calculated on a basis of an empty stomach and rain-soaked, blistered feet.

"Sign me up first!" pleaded Ikey. "I'll fall asleep if I get afore a fire! Sign me up, an' then let me sleep. . . . Never mind the coffee neither till I've been before the beak!"

The sergeant stared down at him incredulously.

"You want to be a Scotchman, I suppose, and wear a kilt?" he surmised, grinning underneath his wonderfully clipped mustache. His face, though, was set hard and non-committal.

"Listen 'ere!" said Ikey hoarsely. "I'd be anything! I'd be a Scotchman—sure I'd be a Scotchman! I'd be a H Irishman either, or a Dutchman, or a blackface artist in a khaki suit! Swear me in, that's all, and slap me into any kind o' reg'ment you like! S'elp me, I'll learn to ride a 'orse if you say the word!"

The sergeant grinned.

"In here!" he said. "Through this gate to the left. There, in you go. Give him a chair, Joe, will you? That's it; now, sit down in front of the fire and warm yourself, Solomon, while I see about some coffee for you."

"What have you got?" asked the sergeant he addressed as Joe, standing back to get a better look at Ikey.

"Exhibit A. Specimen of one o' the Lost Tribes; thinks he's cut out for a Scotchman!"

"Well, there's no law against enlisting Jews. D'you think he can pass the doctor? What d'you suppose he weighs?"

"He's too light for the Infantry."

The other sergeant nodded.

"I'll bet the police are after him. Better let him warm himself and then turn

him loose; they'd only come and arrest him if we did get him passed."

"Guess again!" said Ikey, rubbing his hands together before the blazing fire. "I ain't done nothing. I ain't wanted."

"Are you sure?"

"Why wouldn't I be?"

"Can you give a reference? Do you mind if some one goes to Scotland Yard with a description of you?"

"E can take me with 'im for all I care. I ain't done nothing. You could put me right next to all the bobbies in London, and I wouldn't turn a 'air."

"Let's try him," said Sergeant Number One. "If they won't take him, why they won't. That's none of our business. Let's measure him and see."

So they made Ikey stand up while they put the tape over him; and they discovered that his expanded chest was large enough by exactly one-sixteenth of an inch, and that his height was a thirty-second of an inch above the minimum.

"A near thing!" said Sergeant Number One.

"Bow-legged, too!" said the other one.

"Not so very. Won't hurt him in the Cavalry. By the time the riding-master was through with him, he'd be bow-legged anyhow. He's pigeon-toed, though."

"They'll soon alter that. Let the doctor pass on him."

And so leave was given another circumstance to exercise its will on Ikey. The wheel turned one more cog. He was marched into a bench-lined dressing-room and stripped; and clothed in nothing but his Hebrew modesty he was taken through another door and stood before a doctor. And that doctor had a queer little curve above his nostril, for all that his name began with Mac; and he happened to have received that very morning a letter from a medical magazine accepting for publication an article of his on the hereditary stamina of Jews.

"His lungs are sound, and his heart's all right, and his eyes are better than the average," he commented, filling up a printed form. "Stand him on the scales."

So Ikey Blumendall was weighed and valued at a shilling and a penny a day, plus uniform and food and quarters, while the sergeant who had brought him in grinned under cover of his hand.

"Certified as fit for Cavalry," said the doctor, signing his name at the bottom of

the sheet. "Now take him off and feed him."

But there were other preliminaries to be seen to first. A man in uniform came around from Scotland Yard, where they have every known criminal systematically registered and men who are trained to recognize them. The blue-clad minion of the law took one keen look at him and laughed aloud.

"Yes, he's all right," he admitted. "He was 'round at Scotland Yard a week ago, trying to join the force. Wasn't big enough, or strong enough, but there's nothing against his character."

"Let's get the rest of it over, then," said the sergeant. "Come on, Solomon."

So Ikey was sworn in with due formality, as a necessary preliminary to being fed on Queen Victoria's Christian pork. It was noticed that if he were neither soldier nor Christian yet, he at least had a military-Christian appetite; he had two helps of pork.

II

 NOW it would be kinder, much—both to the British Army, and to Ikey Blumendall—to draw a veil over all that happened in the year that followed his enlistment. But the truth will out, and some of it is essential to the story.

The Regiment of cavalry to which he was assigned had picked up somewhere in the wilds of Northern India the name of "The Who's Afraid?" By dint of a special warrant signed by royalty in person they had had the name incorporated in the regimental motto, and to a man they were doing their living, loving, and ungrudging best to live up to it. On every trooper's shako, wrought in silver underneath a bristling crest of tigers intertwined with spears in rest, was the legend in bold Roman characters, "WHO'S AFRAID?"

And there was no getting away from, or even trying to ignore, the fact that Ikey was afraid, and knew it. The Colonel knew it, and the last-joined bandsman knew it, and every single horse of the thousand-odd that squealed and whinnied at the very sound of jingling spurs; and Ikey, poor little Ikey with the curl above his nostril and the crooked legs, bore the horrid consequences.

Rough-voiced, rough-mannered, rough-riding corporals and sergeants did their

level best with him. To prove to him the utter senselessness of fear they turned him loose in the riding-school, with a halter in his hand, to catch and mount a seven-year-old rogue that was shortly to be cast for vice; and half of the Regiment looked on to watch the fun. When Ikey came out of hospital some ten days later, he was put at once to grooming the same horse, and he was duly punished—with abuse and additional fatigue—because the horse's state was not even approximately military at the end of a two-hour struggle. Finally, from sheer desperation and not by any means from pity, he was given a corporal's job each morning of grooming manes and tails—with the result that sixteen horses every morning looked, according to the Adjutant's account of it, as if they had "just come in off grass!"

The one thing that a horse can sense most quickly is fear: he hates it, and shows his hate by kicking; so the stables, when Ikey Blumendall tiptoed down the line, were a pandemonium of lifting heels and bared white teeth and squeals. And the barrack yard, when Ikey showed himself, was like a school-boy playground. Men sprang at him from behind corners with arms outstretched, and yelled "Boo!" at him, to see him jump; and other men took him on one side and told him with grisly detail what a lance felt like when it entered a man's anatomy. He was told, too, what it looked like to fall off on parade and be ridden over by a squadron at the gallop, and was shown how easily a sword could jump loose from its scabbard and impale a man who fell off his horse. And there was even worse than that.

The Colonel, who was by no manner of means a martinet, but who had methods of his own for eradicating the fear that he himself neither experienced nor understood, took Ikey in hand and had a talk to him. He asked him some questions first of all, such as wasn't he proud to be a trooper in the Regiment. And Ikey answered, "Yes, sir!"

"Wouldn't you like to be a credit to the Regiment?" asked the Colonel.

And Ikey said "Yes" to that as well.

"The man's all right!" the Colonel told the Adjutant. "He's only in need of proper teaching. I'll deal with him, and we'll soon see!"

And Ikey saluted and retired, shivering.

The next morning the Regiment was exercised in squadron drill, and Ikey, who was not known to have a note of music in his being, was given a trumpet and told to sling it over his shoulder. He was mounted on a horse that had more than a mere turn of speed and unquenchable ambition to display it, and was placed close to the Colonel in front of both squadrons; and after a series of cut-and-dried maneuvers at the trot, both squadrons went the whole length of the exercise ground together at a break-neck thundering gallop, knee to knee.

The Colonel was a little stout, and getting gray-haired, and was the father of a family; and Ikey was none of these things; but the chief difference was that the Colonel liked it.

The squadron halted with a crash—four thousand hoofs into the ground together; one thousand struggling, straining, snorting, jingling chargers stopping their momentum in their own length; and as the five hundred tons or more of live energy came to a thundering standstill, Ikey drove his spurs home on his own account, and left the crashing fear behind him. He reined his horse in more than half a mile away, and because the brute wanted to rejoin the Regiment at the gallop, he dismounted, and led him back—all the way back to stables.



OF COURSE, after that incident Ikey's life, which had not been a bed of roses hitherto, became a veritable hell. The men who had jeered at him, and joked with him more or less good-naturedly, refused now to speak to him at all; they would not even let him buy beer for them. He was condemned to another recruit course in the riding-school, and set to doing all the different odd jobs of fatigue that every soldier hates with all his being, and was ostracized by officers and non-commissioned officers and men alike. Men fought rather than sleep in the next cot to him; they walked out of the canteen when he walked in, and told him no more blood-curdling stories about pigs on battlefields.

It was the loneliness that followed that saved Ikey from the ignominy of dismissal. One afternoon the bandmaster heard music that should not have been emanating from a should-be-empty band room; it was music, too, beyond a doubt of it, played by a man who had a soul for sound. And when he

opened the door suddenly and peeped in, he was just in time to catch Ikey in the act of putting back a regimental cornet into its case.

"Play that again!" said the bandmaster; and Ikey played the melody from Rubinstein until the bandmaster's eyes glistened at the thought of the treasure he had found. From that day Ikey was supernumerary bandsman, and a new and pleasanter career began.

The horses that the bandsmen rode were old ones, chosen for the task because they were dependable and staid; that, of course, suited Ikey nearly as well as making music did, for sitting on a quiet horse and making music in the sunshine before an admiring crowd was a very different matter from being squeezed in the middle of a thundering line, or spun out of the saddle as his troop wheeled at the gallop. The band was at full strength before he joined it, but as supernumerary bandsman he enjoyed the full privileges, even if he were liable to be sent back to the ranks at a moment's notice.

He began to get his nerve back; he even learned to swagger just a little, and since he never fell foul now of his commanding officer he began to have occasional afternoons when he was not confined to barracks. When he first hit the pavement outside the barrack walls with a pair of jingling heels, and a riding-whip tucked under his arm, he was so terrified that he turned back again before he had gone two hundred yards. He thought that all the world was looking at him, and when anybody laughed he was certain that he himself was the target of the laughter. But at the second attempt he progressed more than a mile before a panic seized him, and ultimately there came a day when Ikey could walk out of barracks unafraid and swagger along the pavement like a bantam cock.

When he had reached that stage, he bought himself a pair of spurs that jingled better than those served out to him, and a whip that was full six inches longer; and then, with his boots so shiny that one could scarcely look at them, his buttons radiating sunshine like a row of helios, and his "cowlick" soaped into a curl below the saucy little pill-box cap that perched above his ear, he strutted out of barracks like a full-grown cavalryman, and took the penny bus to High Street, Whitechapel.

At High Street he alighted and flicked

imaginary dust off his boots and buttons. Then he could be seen studying his carriage and deportment for at least five minutes in a shop window, throwing out his chest until his back was like a bow, and arranging the angle of his elbows. Several small boys were satisfied before he was, and urged him to begin the next part of the performance, but Ikey had a soul above repartee at that crisis in his affairs, and he continued to study poise until he had it to his satisfaction.

Then, with a proper military motion, Ikey turned and swaggered up the street, looking neither to the right nor left of him—spurs jingling, whip swinging, and chin upward. He did not stop until he reached a little shop, where the name, "J. Blumen-dall," was painted up above the window. But there he hesitated for about three minutes, while some of the swagger left him; it seemed to filter out through his heels, and to leave nothing but the same old Ikey who had stood in the rain before the recruiting-sergeant. He pulled himself together, though, and passed on; and as he left the little shop behind him his back grew straight again and presently resumed its convex curve; and again the spurs jingled. He was evidently bent on some heroic mission that precluded sentiment.

But the hall mark of downtrodden ages is not easy to efface, and the bearing of the Hebrew is as different—because of breeding and ambition and past history—from that of the cavalryman as the plus sign is from the minus; so when Ikey reached the big fruit and vegetable shop that flaunted its varicolored wares between a Non-Conformist chapel and a public house, he was a Jew again. He was a rosy-cheeked, well fed, healthy-looking Jew, but no man with half an eye could have mistaken his nationality for a moment. And there was none of the cavalry swagger left in him as he approached the girl who was wrangling over the price of carrots with a down-at-heel Whitechapel hussy.



"'OW-DO?" he grinned, and held his hand out. But the lady had no time to notice him; the price of carrots was infinitely more important, and it takes all the time of two sharp eyes to watch an open shop window in the heart of Whitechapel.

Ikey summoned up his wilting courage

with an obvious effort, and stood right in front of her, elbowing the customer away.

"Ow-do, Rachel?" he repeated. And this time the damsel deigned to turn two gorgeous, dark brown, Eastern eyes on him.

"Goodness gracious!" she exclaimed, in a voice that was a little hardened by the rigorous trade conditions of High Street. Her face was lovely, and her figure was divine, but they were evidently neither of them meant for Ikey, for they combined to express amazement and disgust and ridicule in a way that would have made an artist, or an actress, rave.

"Here, you, Abie! Pa! Joe! Come an' look!"

"Come an' look at what?" inquired a busy voice.

"Ikey's come back in a uniform! Ikey's been an' joined the Army! Come an' look!"

There was a rush from the inner shop, and another rush from the street outside; they can scent a happening in Whitechapel more quickly than in Paris even, and in less than half a minute Ikey stood surrounded by a jeering crowd, while Rachel, and Pa Silberstein, and Abie Silberstein, and a florid, beefy gentleman addressed as Joe confronted him in most expressive silence.

"What d'jer want?" inquired Pa Silberstein, in a voice that betrayed no real anxiety to know, and again the crowd jeered. A small boy ducked in underneath the crowd, and tried to twist off one of Ikey's spurs, getting his hand well pricked for his pains.

"Shame!" yelled the men nearest, and some one laid a hand on Ikey's arm.

"Here! What's this?" said a voice. "Move along there! Pass along there! Move along—come on, now! No blocking up the pavement!"

A policeman loomed gigantic above the stunted East End crowd, and shoved his weight into the swarm; it melted away in front of him, still jeering, and Ikey was left standing in front of Rachel and her family.

"What's wrong?" asked the policeman.

"There's a so'jer shuttin' out the sunshine! That's what's wrong!" said Rachel, and the florid man named Joe grinned until his nose and chin very nearly met above his fat lips.

"Better move on, sonny, hadn't you?" the policeman suggested. "What's the use o' lookin' for trouble?"

"I weren't lookin' for trouble!" said Ikey,

with tears in his voice. "Honest, I——"

"Never mind! You pass along—it's better!"

So Ikey "passed along," with all the starch washed out of him, and with his spurs no longer jingling. The Silbersteins who ran the fruit shop gazed after him in disrespectful silence until his short, unstalwart form had been swallowed up in the hurrying crowd, and then laughed loud and all together, and resumed their business of selling fruit and vegetables. But Ikey, sick and sore at heart, stumbled and hurried and almost ran along the street until he reached the little haberdashery where "Blumendall" was written up above the window.

He did not waste a second in rearranging his uniform or poise on this occasion, but burst in through the swinging door and rushed through the outer shop, past a curtain, to a room behind.

"Father!" he exclaimed in agony.

"My goodness gracious!" said an astonished voice. And a little old gray-haired man leaped up from the desk where he was sitting, and threw up both hands, palms outward, and opened his mouth wide, and gasped.

"My goodness gracious!" he repeated. "You, Ikey! You!"

"Yes, father!" answered Ikey, looking sheepish. "Me! Who did yer take me for?"

"I took yer for a waster! I thought maybe you'd got pinched! I thought yer might 'ave run away to be an actor! I thought all kinds o' things! An' 'ere you come back a so'jer! My goodness gracious, Ikey! What did yer do it for? What'll yer ma say?"

Ikey's whole secret came out under his father's bombardment of questions; he concealed it as long as he could, but it was so good, after all that he had been through, to have some one at last who would understand him and who would listen, that his father had very little difficulty in getting him to talk.

It was Rachel Silberstein, of course—Rachel, the gorgeous and glib-tongued, who not only would not deign to marry him, but who would not even admit his manhood! Disdaining the usual Hebrew intermediary, he had gone direct to her, and had hinted at the prosperous little business he was heir to; and she had tongue-lashed him, and told him that no man would do

for her who could not climb up the ladder on his own account.

With the plethoric Joe Cohen in her mind, she had told him that the man for her would be a man who had no paternal business to build on, but who had faced the wide world without a penny and had won his way. But above all, she had assured him, she would never look at a man who could not say "Bo!" to a goose, and who had never been outside the purlieus of Whitechapel. She would take a man who knew a thing or two—who was strong of arm, and quick of wit, and who could rustle it with the best of them.

And poor little Ikey, of the vast ambition and the all-too-feeble flesh, had taken her at her word, and had run away to make a fortune to lay in her lap. First he had tried to get a job, wandering hungry and disconsolate around London; and then, when all chance of that seemed to have vanished as his clothes grew shabbier and his little store of money disappeared, he had remembered that Rachel's man was at least to be a real man; and he bethought him of the police force. He did not imagine for a moment that Rachel Silberstein would deign to marry a policeman; but he did think that when she saw him in his neat blue uniform, swaggering down the street and moving people on about their business, she would be forced to admit he was a man. He could endure to live without her; he could even endure to see her some one else's wife; but her contempt was altogether unendurable, and had to be remedied forthwith. So he had tried for the police—and failed.

His father might have viewed a police uniform with tolerance, if not with any pronounced degree of enthusiasm; but Ikey knew very well indeed that a soldier's uniform would be a very different matter. Jews have as a rule as little use for the Army as the Army has for Jews. But Ikey became so down and out and hungry that there was only one alternative to enlistment, and that alternative was home.

At home, he knew, he would be welcomed and forgiven; but he would have to swallow his pride. He would have to let Rachel see him back again behind the counter in his father's store, a confessed dependent, and the thought was quite intolerable. So, when the last penny had been spent and he had reached the last shred of

his endurance he had walked up to a recruiting-sergeant, and by dint of luck and circumstance and argument had managed to get enlisted.



HIS father listened to the tale without comment, punctuating it every now and then with short, dry questions that served to bring out fresh details into the light of criticism; and what he thought of it was evident in his keen old eyes, which blazed while he listened.

"My goodness gracious!" he exclaimed for about the fortieth time, when the recital of Ikey's woes was finished. "Well! You're in! 'Ow'd yer set about gettin' out again?"

Ikey shook his head.

"I'm signed for fourteen years!" he answered.

"What?"

Ikey nodded and hung his head.

"Can't yer get out? Not buy yerself out, nor nothin'?"

"You can buy out."

"'Ow much?"

"Twenty-five."

"Shillin's?"

"Pounds!"

"My goodness gracious! Well! 'Ere you are! Take it!"

He opened a safe, extracted five five-pound notes, and gave them to him.

"Go on—take it! I'll cut it off yer wages, mind!"

But Ikey shook his head.

"No!" he said slowly. "I won't take it!"

"WHAT? You do as I say!"

Ikey shook his head again, and the old man lost his temper.

"You!" he snarled. "You're not fit to be a soldier! You're a sight! You're a shame on your poor old father! You're a shame on every one that ever had anything to do with you!"

"I won't be a shame on the Reg'ment!" answered Ikey. He removed his cap and twisted it 'round and 'round on his forefinger until his father knocked it to the floor and kicked it passionately into the outer shop.

"Don't flaunt me such trash in here!" he ordered. "Now go where I kicked that; and don't come back, mind, with that uniform on, d'you understand! You stay in the Army—good; I've done with you! You leave the Army—good; you can come back 'ere!"

"Can't I prove what I want to prove?" asked Ikey. "Can't I 'ave a chancet to prove I'm as good as the rest?"

"Prove nothing! Get out o' here, an' come back without that tunic on; then I'll talk to yer! Git out!"

He went through the motions of a man kicking, and Ikey took the hint—picking up his cap in the outer shop and passing out sorrowfully into the street. He hesitated there for about a minute, and once he half turned, as though to go back in again; but another cavalryman passed down the street opposite, with his chest thrown out like a pouter pigeon's, and an expression on his face that read "The world is mine!"—and Ikey set his teeth, and threw out his own chest, and turned his back on his father's haberdashery, and marched—with spurs that jingled and a whip that swung—straight back in the direction of the barracks. He would show them all!

But when he reached the barracks, a corporal was rude to him; and a sergeant pounced on him and bullied him because there was dust and silk thread on his cap. And three troopers lounging at a corner called him names. Another trooper, to whom he offered a cigarette, refused it; and finally the sergeant of the day bore down on him, and cast him for fatigue.

"Here you!" he ordered. "You're no use under heaven! Come on and shovel coal!"

III



SLOWLY, and by very painful stages, Ikey learned. As a supernumerary bandsman he was on the squadron strength still, and liable to be called on to join the ranks again at any minute; so he escaped almost nothing of the regular routine of drill, and gained little in the way of comfort beyond a quieter horse to ride and at least one man's approval. The bandmaster almost praised him once or twice.

Nothing under heaven could have made a horseman or a swordsman of him, or could have taught him that a horse was anything less than a four-legged enemy; but as his sergeant-major made the slowly dawning discovery that Ikey was not such a bad little fellow after all, he began to take pity on him. There was something pathetic in the little Hebrew's patient misery and equally patient obedience; and there was

very little sense in putting him on the worst horses when he had to drill with the squadron in preparation for the annual inspection; so he was given the oldest, quietest mounts to ride, and the opportunity to hide his shortcomings.

He learned to go through sword drill in time, and without mistakes, and he absolutely never came up for punishment on any serious charges, so he gained the rather contemptuous good will of his officers. And one night, when a squadron corner-man was taken sick, the discovery was made that Ikey Blumendall could sing. He sang coster songs to half a dozen encores, and did a double shuffle at the finish that brought down the house roaring with applause.

Within a week after that Ikey was appointed regular corner-man by the unanimous vote of the whole Squadron, and there was even some talk of putting him up to sing against the First Life Guards, who had an ex-professional in their ranks. A man has to do only one thing, and do it well, to be accepted on his merits in the British Army; men began to joke with him about his riding, instead of cursing him; and of course he began to ride better. By the time that the Regiment was ordered out to India, it would have been a very shrewd civilian who could have picked him out as being the worst horseman in the Regiment; he still could not ride, but he could hide the fact.

And the long cold-weather training under canvas in Northern India made another man of him. There, where the whole Army is on a war footing all the time, and the last least lick of ultra-efficiency is the only thing to strive for, the bands are cut down to the regulation number; so Ikey had to be a trooper in real earnest. The strain half killed him at the beginning; the raw, red Walers that he had to ride took tribute from him in the shape of sweat and goose-flesh and trembling limbs; but when evening came, and the men sprawled around the camp-fires, he sang songs about the Old Kent Road and the joys of 'Ampstead 'Eath that made even officers forget his shortcomings.

And when fires burned up and down the Khaibar Pass, and Abdul Rahman claimed the throne of Kabul, and the Regiment was ordered out to back the strong right arm of Bobs Bahadur, there was no thought of leaving Ikey Blumendall behind; they wanted him to sing on the long, cold marches, and far better fighting-men than he

were left to do baggage guard and look after details.

Ikey saw a train load or two of Afghan prisoners, and shuddered at the sight of them. He saw a train or two of wounded carried down the Khaibar, groaning on their stretchers, and he passed stone cairns along the cold bleak Hills that covered British dead; and his heart turned weak within him.

But he heard, too, the exultant yell of greeting that arose from the ranks of Gurkhas and Sikhs alike when the two squadrons with the two-hundred-year-old reputation pranced and jingled to their aid. And he rode in review in front of Bobs himself, and felt the thrill pass down the line—the strange, inexplicable thrill that tells when a Man has charge of Men. Ikey would have scorned to be a bandsman after that.

He met with lean, lithe, blood-proud Rajputs, who called him "sahib" for his Regiment's sake, and Afridi prisoners who paid him the compliment of cursing him through close-set-teeth. And he heard Bobs Bahadur address the assembled rank and file as "Gentlemen!" If Rachel Silberstein could have heard that, he thought, she would have changed her mind about what the man should be who married her.

He, Ikey Blumendall, trooper in the "Who's Afraid?" and sometime haberdasher in High Street Whitechapel, was a gentleman! Bobs, who never lied, or went back on his word, or blamed a man wrongly, or gave praise where it was not due—Bobs, who could call to a frozen, hungry army and lead it roaring over a devil-defended skyline—who could hold back an Irish Regiment from its loot, and could sting a Hindu baggage guard into forty-mile-a-day activity—the One and Only Bobs had said as much! Well—they should see!

And then it was forward—on to Kabul, where the frost-chilled fight awaited them; and long, lean marksmen measured out the ranges and chipped rifle rests between the hillside crags.

"I'm about the size of Bobs!" thought Ikey to himself.

IV



TO REALIZE fully the rest of all that happened to Ikey Blumendall, it is necessary first to bear in mind that he was a Jew. That is to say, among other things, that his imagination was by a

long way the greatest part of him. Where the others of his Regiment were thinking only of what the feel would be when their lances ran shaft-deep into the body of an Afghan, or whether it were possible—as some said—to hew a man through from shoulder to ribs diagonally with one sword-cut, Ikey was imagining the horror of the other end of it. He had only to see an Afghan to feel the sharp blade of a curved tulwar pressing against his stomach.

He was as proud by this time of the Regiment as was any other trooper in it; his backbone thrilled as theirs did when native regiment and English alike made way for them, and the "Who's Afraid?" went clattering off at dawn to draw first blood if they could get in touch. Riding like that, in column, he could catch the spirit of the thing, and what weakened him at other times made him the very bravest of them then; his imagination let him see twice as far as they could, and filled him with that much more enthusiasm.

But night picket duty was another matter. Then he was alone, sitting his horse breast-deep in a chilly mist, listening intently for the sound of breech-blocks snapping, or the rattling of a tulwar over stone. An armed, oiled Afghan could have crept in any minute, sneaking along where the mist-wraiths coiled among the crags; and then a dead horse and a dead Ikey would have been the outcome. He knew, for men had told him, that the first warning he was like to get would be a rattle of steel on stone as the Afghan rose to his feet to rush; and his orders, given to him by the officer who posted him, were calculated to increase his fear, not lessen it. His first thought was to be, not to defend himself, but to give the alarm before he died.

One risk he certainly did not run; he stood no chance of being shot at daybreak for sleeping at his post. It takes an unimaginative man to perform that feat when an enemy is afoot that understands the art of sniping, and the even greater art of night surprises. Ikey would sit his horse where he was told to, on some level piece of rock that raised him head and shoulders up above the fog, and would sweat, with strained ears and puckered eyes and cold chills running up and down his spine, until morning came and showed him friends lying down below him instead of enemies.

Of course, it was not always his turn—

not even once a week; but the nights between turns were spent in dreaming ghastly dreams of picket duty, and waking suddenly with a half checked scream to think that an Afghan tulwar man was on him. The hunger of the long, cold marches meant little or nothing to him, for he had seen enough of hunger in the East End of London to think little of it; and he knew that there would always be a meal of some sort at some time or other. And mere weariness meant no more to him than it did to the other men; it perhaps meant even less. But the terror of the nights on picket duty was worse torture, because it was solely mental, than even the wounded suffered in the *doolees* on the long march southward down the Khaibar.

At that stage of the campaign he could easily have managed to fall behind; and in that case he would probably have been rounded up by some one on the baggage column and have been put to guarding Hindu porters at the rear. Or, it would have been quite easy to hurt himself and be invalided to the base; he would have received his campaign medal then without any further risk. But he did nothing of the kind. He meant to go forward, up to Kabul, with Bobs Bahadur, and instead of taking prompt advantage of the first sickness that attacked him, he concealed the fact that he was ill, and rode on with the Regiment, singing songs to prove his usefulness.

So it happened that when the Regiment, both squadrons side by side, swept down a long boulder-bespattered slope in open order, closed, as the sticks of a fan close, at the bottom, and surged like a narrow stream in spate through a twisting, blind defile on to a plain beyond, Ikey rode with it—praying the God of his forefathers to save his knees from being crushed between the saddles on either side of him. When the column-of-troop formation, that took them through the pass, gave place to open order in line again, and then "Close order!" sounded, and the panting wings sidled in on the center at the gallop, Ikey was squeezed out of the rear rank and dropped behind.

Then the halt sounded. They were on ground that was supposed to have been thoroughly reconnoitered, but the enemy was visible in force on the rising ground ahead, and the Colonel stopped them to

take a careful look before endeavoring to engage. Ikey spurred his horse forward and tried to squeeze his way back into place again, but the ranks were closed; he was asking his left and right-hand man to make room for him, when a veritable hell-sent hail of rifle fire rang out suddenly from close range, and apparently from every quarter of the compass. There were Afghans lying hidden underneath the scattered boulders, and the "Who's Afraid?" were trapped.



WHEE-EE-EE-EE! whined the bullets, and down went horse and man alike in dense-packed, struggling confusion.

"Form up!" yelled some one, a corporal probably.

"Dismount!" roared the Colonel; and those who still had live horses under them dismounted. Ikey's horse was down already, thrashing out his life under the feet of a dozen others. Ikey dragged himself clear of the stamping *mêlée*, and stood for a second hesitating what to do; his every instinct told him to run like a hare for cover, and he probably would have tried it had not some one grabbed him by the neck and kicked him to collect his senses and yelled:

"Catch that horse! D'you see him!"

He half turned his head and recognized the Adjutant, but half a second later he found himself propelled almost headlong in the direction of his mission. The dismounted men were forming up, with the unhilt horses in the center in charge of "number threes"; one half of them were down on their knees already, volleying with their carbines, and the other half were gathering up the wounded. The Colonel had dismounted and had laid a wounded subaltern across his saddle, when a chance shot had stung the charger on the flank, and had sent him trotting off; the horse stopped and looked about him, turning this way and that, with the wounded man still perched across his back, and it was this horse that Ikey had been told to catch. As he started after it, propelled on his way by an impatient heave from the Adjutant, the Regiment started a crabwise, carefully conducted movement for the nearest cover, three or four hundred yards away.

Ikey ran, hampered by a sword—that was made fast to the men's waists in those

days instead of to the saddle; Bobs of Kandahar attended to that detail when the '79 campaign was over—and by his tight, long riding-boots and spurs. And from the opposite direction came half a dozen Afghans, intent on loot. They crept along the ridges, under cover; Ikey staggered and reeled and stumbled across the open, infinitely too afraid to think of precautions of any kind, but thrilled right through to the core of him by the thought that he had been singled out to run the risk. He reached the charger just as two Afghans did. He and they snatched at the bridle at the same moment, but the horse turned his head toward the white man, whinnying, and Ikey grabbed it first.

The Afghans grabbed at him, and he loosed the bridle and screamed with fright as a pair of copper-colored hairy arms stretched out toward him. Moved by nothing else than fright, he snatched at his sword hilt and stood still for a fraction of a second with his sword half drawn, and from the corner of his eye he saw the other Afghan reaching to drag the subaltern to earth.

That settled it. He drew his sword, and brought the flat of it down with all his might on the charger's rump; the horse reared and plunged, and started at a gallop for the slowly retiring square, and a cheer from the Regiment told him that his move had been seen and appreciated. Next instant a bullet laid the second Afghan low, and as the first one swung his tulwar to make an end of Ikey, the little trooper, with the breath and half the life scared out of him, fell face foremost, with the hilt of his sword downward.

The Afghan failed to stop the swing of his tulwar in time; he missed and slipped, and Ikey jabbed upward frantically with his sword point. The next thing that he realized, he was running for the Regiment with all his might, tripping and jumping and stumbling, and wiping, as he ran, the blood from an Afghan's stomach off his face and neck. Ikey Blumendall had killed a man! And the Regiment had seen it, and was still roaring its applause.

He joined his troop under cover of a hot fire from the carbines; they opened up to let him through, and a subaltern found time to thump him on the back. And next, he heard a voice that he could have recognized among a million shouting—

"Send that man here!"

He was pushed, and pulled, and dragged, and shoved this way and that, deafened by the volleys, bewildered by the shouting and confusion, scared nearly to death again by the plunging horses that dragged at the "number threes" four different ways at once, and blinded by the smoke from the carbines and the blood that had run into his eyes, and brought up at last all-standing before somebody he failed to recognize, who sat on the rump of a shot horse and scribbled on a piece of paper. He recognized the voice that spoke to him, though, and he saluted by instinct.

"You'd the name of being a coward, sir!" said the Colonel, continuing to write. "You've changed it! Now, mount my charger, and carry this message. Find General Roberts and give it into his hand, do you hear! He'll be somewhere on the far side of that hill in the direction that we came from. Don't spare the horse. Hurry, now! That's all."

Some one led the Colonel's charger to him; some one else put a hand beneath his foot and tossed him up into the saddle; and a third man spanked the horse. Before he knew it, Ikey was careering blindly out of the square, headed southward, with a piece of paper crumpled in his fist and a greater fear than any he had known as yet crawling all up and down his spine.



VOLLEY after volley from the Afghans greeted him, and Ikey lay low along the charger's neck and prayed. The stirrup leathers were too long for him by several inches; they swung loose and beat against the horse's flanks and urged the animal to do its best. His sword beat up and down at his side in time to the horse's efforts, and the reins were clutched up between his fingers just anyhow; the horse was obeying the urging of the stirrup irons and not of Ikey Blumendall, who was neither able to guide nor to see where he was going.

But as he rode, his senses gradually came back to him, and on top of the crawling fear he had not had time to understand there dawned on him the horrid realization of where he was, and whither he rode, and why. He sat up then, and looked about him. There were Afghans—nine or ten of them—running to cut him off; they were not troubling to shoot at him; they were making for the neck of the narrow defile

that lay between him and the Army, and they evidently meant to pull him off his horse and make him prisoner. And he had heard how Afghans treated prisoners.

His first thought was to rein in and gallop back. But he looked down at the saddle and the splendid charger underneath him, and the yellow worsted on his tunic sleeves, and the thought came—

"Who was he?"

A trooper of the Who's Afraid! A gentleman, by grace of Bobs Bahadur's favor! And the note he bore was for none other than the Only Bobs himself!

But ten Afghans! Mother of him! And, oh the sickening sense of fear! They were lined up now across the neck of the defile, two yards or so apart, in readiness to seize him wherever he might choose to head for! Well, he was a gentleman, and they were Afghans; he would show them!

His brain was working now—the keen, quick-thinking Hebrew brain with its inheritance of cunning picked from the ghettos of centuries—the brain that has kept the Jews from absolute extinction. And as he drew nearer to them he drew rein, until the charger trotted and he bumped up and down on the saddle like a dry pea on a drum. The Afghans closed in on one another carelessly, leaving both sides of the defile clear. Ikey legged his charger a little to the left, and threw up his arms; the Afghans clustered in his way, and the jezails that had covered him went down, butts to the earth again. Ikey rode nearer, and legged his horse yet a little farther to the left; the Afghans moved a little to the left to intercept him. His hands were still above his head, and they had no doubt whatever that he had surrendered; only two of them took the trouble even to take as much as a step forward to seize the horse's bridle.

But as they reached out, Ikey's hands went down, and the loose-hung bridle was snatched tight again. In went his near spur, rowel-deep, and the charger plunged. Ikey's left foot took the nearest Afghan full in the chin, and sent him reeling, and the horse galloped wide of the second one by more than a yard. The rest were nowhere in it; Ikey galloped to the right of them by an easy twenty feet, and headed up the defile full speed, beating at the charger's flank with the flat of his sword, and urging him with yells to greater efforts.

A jezail is not a machine to snap-shoot with; it takes a second or two to lift the length of it, and yet more seconds to draw a bead on a flying target; and Ikey was a hundred yards or more up the defile before they had him covered and could send the bullets winging after him. Then, though, they made the lead fly in deadly earnest. One bullet struck his left forearm and smashed the bone; he turned and shook his other fist at them and yelled defiance. Another bullet hit him in the shoulder, and he fell forward on the horse's neck, still finding strength to urge him, though, and still shouting back Whitechapel abuse. Half a minute later he was around a bend, and out of sight and range; and five minutes after that he fell off rather than dismounted, and handed his despatch to General Roberts himself. Then he sat down on the ground without permission or apology, and vomited.

Bobs Bahadur read the note, and a second later his bugle of a voice sang out a string of orders; six gallopers wheeled their chargers on their haunches, and streaked off thundering in six different directions. From three different sides at once, Highlanders and Gurkhas and native and British cavalry began to move in a suddenly conceived maneuver that was destined not only to relieve the "Who's Afraid?" but to turn the Afghan trap into a trap for Afghans; and then Bobs had time to do one of the characteristic things that have made so many men so completely glad to die in his command.

"What's that man's name?" he asked, looking down at the prostrate Ikey.

It was Ikey himself who answered him.

"Trooper Isaac Blumendall, of the Who's Afraid!"

Bobs smiled.

"I'll remember it!" he said. "Well done, sir! Attend to him, some one!"

Then he galloped off, leaving the bleeding Ikey staring after him with open mouth.

"Said he'd remember it!" he muttered.

V



IF YOU walk down the High Street, Whitechapel, and come to the door of the prosperous-looking little haberdashery that stands wedged between a pawnshop and a grocery and next door but one to the kosher meat shop,

walk in; you will find the visit worth your while. At the far end of the shop there is a curtain, and if you draw that back, a little bow-legged Hebrew will rise to meet you. He has only one arm these days, and his name is Ikey Blumendall.

Above his desk, framed in a silver case, there hangs an Afghan medal for the campaign of '79; and you will have very little difficulty in getting Mr. Blumendall to talk about it. The only other thing in the world that he is really proud of is his wife Rachel, who looks after the shop in front, and he has no objection to talking about her either.

"Yes, sir," he will tell you, with one eye on the portrait of Bobs of Kandahar, which adorns the otherwise blank space above the files, "that's my medal; my name's on the rim of it. You may say I've seen a little of the world—yes, sir, you may! I've been all the way to Kabul in Afghanistan, and I came all the way back again down the Khaibar Pass on the broad of my back in a thing they call a *dooleel*. Yes, sir! Quite a trial that, but it was worth it!

"How's that? Married at the time? Why, no! My wife Rachel had other ideas just then, and so had I; I'd a notion that she was a bit too good for me, and so had she. But General Roberts addressed me as a gentleman and it opened my eyes a little. Yes, sir; Bobs is not the kind of man who makes mistakes, and I took him at his word. So did she.

"How's that? Roberts give me the medal? No, sir, he did not. Her Majesty the Queen gave me that, and pinned it

on me. But when Roberts came to London—I'd left the Army then; invalided out, y'understand—I had the honor of meeting him, and he recognized me right off the reel, and called me by name, and shook hands with me! Yes, sir, shook that hand, the only one I've got left! Made me feel pretty good, that did!

"They say he never forgets a man. Well, sir, if you'll believe me there ain't no one he's shaken hands with'll ever forget him either, or what he said to him! Setting aside altogether the fact that Rachel there considered a man he'd shaken hands with good enough to marry her, there was a whole lot more went with it! Believe me!"

And Ikey Blumendall's talk is not hot air. Joseph Blumendall deceased had the reputation of being just "a little near the knuckle," as they say in Whitechapel; men used to ask him for payment in advance. But Ikey Blumendall's word is considered as good as his bond, or better, and he is looked up to in that neighborhood as the only real authority on straight dealing and gentility.

Besides his haberdashery, he does a very thriving trade in spurs that jingle properly and in swagger canes and whips, and there are few soldiers, and almost no cavalymen who pass that way without giving him a call. He understands their needs and their point of view—two things that are beyond the ken of the ordinary tradesman; and he has found that their point of view is good—good for trade, and good for company, and good whichever way you look at it.



How Bill and I Won the Pennant



THIS is a story of how two bottles of beer (well, maybe four), Good Old Bill and I won the National League pennant for the Chicago Cubs in 1908. Neither of us played for Chicago, but just the same we won for them in that season of strife and excitement that finally embroiled the entire country, and almost caused civil war between Chicago and New York, because Fred Merkle forgot to touch second base.

You all recall that season when the excitement grew day by day and got so intense that it almost made the people forget the presidential campaign. It was the Fall that the clubs representing New York and Chicago finished the scheduled season exactly tied and were compelled to play one game on the Polo Grounds to settle the question of supremacy. I always thought Chicago got the worst of that in being compelled to jump to New York and tackle the Giants on their own grounds and with their one great pitcher ready, but as Chance and his men won, in spite of the handicap, it turned out all right.

I'm not trying to start any old arguments over again; it was hard luck either way it went, and some one had to lose.

Good Old Bill, the four (probably it was six) bottles of beer, and I were not mentioned in that thrilling finish and neither Bill nor I ever was presented with any

medals or diamonds or automobiles or any of the big chunks of money that came from the World's Series.

But we won that pennant all right with the aid of those six (possibly it was eight) bottles of beer. Also for a time Bill and I—the eight (perhaps it was ten) bottles of beer ceasing to count, having become component parts of Bill and me—thought we had uncovered and checkmated the most dastardly plot ever evolved in baseball.

It was a plot to rob Chicago of all chance to win the National League pennant, and at the same time to prevent the Rochester team from winning from Baltimore in the Eastern League. If there had been a plot we would have blocked it as prettily as ever Charlie Dooin ever blocked a runner away from the plate. We did the checking all right—the only trouble was there wasn't any plot. That's the tale.

If you recall the closing weeks of that astonishing National League pennant race, when each day was a climax and each game seemed to end all hope of either Chicago or Pittsburgh winning, you will have some idea of the strain every one connected with either of the teams was under during that period. We all had the jumps; and actually, during the last two weeks of the frenzied struggle it would have been a relief to have lost and settled it once for all.

New York was leading all the time, but

clinging by an eyelash to the narrow lead that could have been closed by the least slip. Chicago was second, close up, fighting grimly and desperately; and from far behind Pittsburgh, sweeping everything before them, came racing down upon the exhausted leaders. The case looked desperate for Chicago, and it seemed as if the Cubs would have to surrender their hard-earned honors to a team they believed was inferior in many ways.

The Chicago team was moving eastward for the final invasion of that section. They would return home for only one more game during the season; and that the last day, a Sunday, which proved historical in the baseball world. Although the Chicago club always had been a strong road team, the handicap was heart-breaking. The New York Giants, holding the lead, were entrenched on the Polo Grounds, where they had the advantage, and their chances seemed much brighter, even admitting that the Chicago team was stronger.

During the ride East we figured it all out, and Manager Chance conceded that the only real hope seemed to lie in reaching New York with the team in top condition and with the pitchers all rested up—that is, with Brown and Pfister in perfect condition to work the entire series; and then to go on to the foe's own field and win four games or three of the four. That necessitated using the more uncertain pitchers against the weaker clubs and carefully nursing the two who had proved most effective against the Giants for that series.

The Eastern series was to open in Boston with four games, and the Boston team was so weak and disorganized that the four games to be played there were already counted as won. Barring accident, Boston did not seem to have a chance to win even one. We figured that in all baseball probability New York would lose one game at least out of four while we were taking four from Boston, and that would place the two teams almost on an equality.

Every player down to the last sub pitcher was keyed for the greatest effort, but no one underestimated the seriousness of the handicap. It is hard enough to take even the best team into the enemy's country and win, but that season it was doubly hard for Chicago. The team already had won two pennants, and every one knows how the tail-end clubs love to beat the champions.

Every club and every club owner wanted the Cubs to lose. They feared if Chicago won again and demonstrated that it was too strong for the others, the interest in the pennant race the following year would be lessened. It was a foolish idea, but they believed it.

There was no fear of any team losing games to New York purposely, but we knew that every team Chicago met would save its best pitchers, let them have a good rest and strain every effort to beat the Cubs. It is almost as much honor for a Brooklyn pitcher to beat another team out of a pennant as it is for a New York pitcher to win one.



THAT was the situation when Bill and I cut into the pennant race and saved Chicago. It took all that explanation just to set the stage for us. As I said, we were on the way East, and it happened that long before any one ever dreamed of such a bruising finish, an exhibition game had been arranged at Rochester against the Rochester Eastern League team.

We came down in a special car from Buffalo. We expected to embark for Boston that same evening on the same car, so instead of taking grips and coats and other impedimenta of a touring club with us to the hotel, we instructed the porter to lock the car, and walked downtown.

Neither Rochester nor the game there has anything to do with it, except that it was where Good Old Bill got into the plot. Remember Good Old Bill? Perhaps you only knew him by his family name. He was a great pitcher at Philadelphia and a good one at Pittsburgh. He had a funny slow curve and a whole lot on his fast one at times, and when he was good his slow ball was sure a wonder.

You knew him by his family name, but among us who played, or wrote, or lived the game, he was Good Old Bill, even when he was a kid, breaking in; and he always will be Good Old Bill. He was slipping, slipping, slipping, at that time, and only a few weeks before they had put the skids under him and dumped him down the first landing—Class A, Rochester, which looks pretty good going up, but pretty bad going back.

Good Old Bill hadn't slipped any in the estimation of his friends. It is a pretty good test of what kind of a fellow a ball player is when his opponents like him almost as well as his team mates do, and when every

one who ever knew him forgets to knock when his arm tightens up, his curve loses its break and his fast ball its jump. When even the man at bat feels a lump come in his throat and almost hates to make a base hit as he watches some grand good fellow throwing his arm and his heart out trying to make a ball do things in the air that it used to do without an effort, then that player is a pretty good fellow. It was that way with Good Old Bill.

We swarmed down to the railway station at Rochester that night feeling more cheerful and less nerve-weary than we had in weeks. The day's outing and freedom from the strain had done every one good. We were half an hour ahead of time and indulging in the horseplay and the joking with which baseball teams while away time.

The quartet, which had not sung in a fortnight, got together. Pretty soon, lonely and almost pathetic, we saw Good Old Bill sitting smoking on the edge of a truck. His new pals with the Rochester club, with whom he scarcely had had time to get well acquainted, had gone to their berths for a good night's rest, for they were trailing behind Baltimore in the pennant race and tomorrow would attack Montreal with more determination than the British did.

There was a bond of sympathy between the two teams, as their positions were the same—both leaving home to battle for honors on foreign fields and under heavy handicaps. The clubs were to go on the same train on the New York Central as far as Utica, where the Rochester team's car would be cut off and sent northward over the Canadian line of the Central to Montreal.

When we saw Bill, sitting there looking about as cheerful as a defeated candidate, we descended upon him, beat him upon the back, cussed him, wrestled with him, punched him in the ribs and showed him that we loved him after the manner of men who are ashamed to show their real affections and hide them that way.

Having properly brought Bill into the story, let's introduce the beer and the plot. It was a hot night and I imagined that I would want a cold bottle of beer before going to bed, both to quench thirst and induce sleep, for I sleep wretchedly in berths.

I inquired of a porter whether or not there was a buffet car attached to the train. Upon being informed that there was none, I suddenly developed a most amazing thirst.

That is the way with men. If there had been a buffet car on the train I probably would have forgotten the beer and gone to bed without it, thereby losing the pennant for Chicago.

I spoke to Bill about the absence of a buffet car, and inside of two minutes we two might as well have been in the middle of Death Valley rattling the last drop around in a hot canteen. We were perishing. The result was that Bill and I decided upon a hurried visit to a beer saloon near the station, where we hastily ordered a supply to take aboard the train.



WHILE we were waiting for the bottles to be wrapped, a young sporting reporter raced into the place, all out of breath. "Say," he said, dragging me aside. "What do you know about this plot?"

"What plot?" I inquired.

"We have a story in the office that there is a plot to beat the Chicago club out of the pennant," he explained hurriedly. "Just got it in the office. Sporting editor told me to tear down here and see some of you fellows before your train left. Where's Chance?"

"Gone to bed," I answered. "We don't know anything of any plot, and about the only way they can plot to beat us is to poison a few of his pitchers. Nothing to the story."

There wasn't time for further argument. As it was, we arrived just two minutes before train time and had to run through the station carrying a couple of suspicious-looking packages that clinked as we sprinted.

Upon just such things do the fates hang. Being uncertain as to how his new manager might look upon the drinking of a bottle or two of beer before retiring, Bill thought it the part of discretion and wisdom to come into the Chicago car. The players were turning in; most of them already were asleep, fighting the diamond battles in their dreams.

Bill and I disrobed as far as was compatible with the ball-player idea of decency and opened one window of the smoking-compartment. The soft, cooling wind, sweet and damp from dew-wet fields, eddied into the car and banished the oven-like atmosphere of the interior. Two corks popped; Bill and I tipped our heads back, and a duet

of gurgles ended in two sighs of perfect contentment.

We must have played about four fifteen-inning games, struck Wagner out in a pinch half a dozen times, and hit four or five home runs off Matty in ninth innings. During the intervals between yarns we transformed the contents of those mysterious packages from freight into passenger.

The train had stopped, and the long vistas of electric lights proved the town a large one, when Bill remarked that he guessed he would finish that bottle and seek his berth to woo sweet slumber. We knew we had passed Syracuse a long time before—in fact, two (or perhaps six) bottles of beer ago—but neither had any idea how far we had gone. The train was starting again when we bade each other good night, good-by, and good luck until such time as Bill might come up into the cleared land again, or fate sent me to join him in the bushes.

I was washing up when the plot began to develop rapidly. Bill, looking a bit foolish, came back into the car and remarked in a puzzled manner—

"Say, was our car in front of or behind this one?"

"Second behind," I spluttered, with face still immersed in the wash bowl.

"I can't find it," remarked Bill. "And it isn't often I mislay anything as big as a sleeping-car. It isn't on this train."

"Have we passed Utica?" I inquired, inspired by a sudden thought.

"Left Utica five minutes ago, boss," volunteered the porter, who had joined us.

I roared with laughter, and Bill and his share of the beer looked grieved.

"Congratulations, Bill," I laughed. "You're back in the big league again. Stick with us. Your car was cut off at Utica and this one is on the way to Boston."

"No, sah, boss," interjected the porter. "This car is bound for Montreal!" It was my turn to look blank and Bill's to laugh.

"Welcome to where you belong!" he roared. "You're back in the bushes sooner than you expected."

We both were having a good laugh over the situation when the seriousness of the affair dawned upon me.

"Holy mackerel, Bill!" I yelled with sudden excitement. "All the Cubs are asleep in this car, and it's bound for Montreal. They can't reach Boston tomorrow to play those two games, and probably can't get

there in time to play the next day. If they don't, their pennant chances are all gone."

"Wow!" yelled Bill. "And the Rochester club is on its way to Boston and can't reach Montreal tomorrow, so Baltimore wins in a canter."

"It's that plot!" I shouted. "The plot that young reporter was talking about. They've framed to keep the Cubs from reaching Boston!"

Bill made a leap for the bell rope, as if to stop the train, but did not jerk it.

"What'll we do?" he said. "Something must be done quick, or they'll turn the trick."

"Wake the Sec, quick!" I screamed at the porter. "This train must be stopped and this car sent back to Utica."

"Sec," otherwise the secretary, who was guardian and protector of ball players, friend, counselor, confessor and first aid to the financially injured, was dragged half asleep from his berth and hauled down the aisle, while Bill and I and the porter yelled and talked to him all at the same time. He yawned widely, stretched himself and asked—

"Did you save me a bottle of that beer?"

Nothing short of the Last Trump would perturb the Sec.

We gesticulated, pleaded and begged Sec to act; and finally we managed, with the assistance of a trainman, to convince him that the car really was on the wrong railroad, going in the wrong direction.

Then things happened. Conductors, Pullman conductors and brakemen were dragged out and the train conductor, finally convinced that the situation was desperate, signaled for a stop at the first telegraph point. Five minutes later the train jarred to a quick stop at a hamlet and Sec, assisted by the trainmen, began the frantic effort to save the day.

The train east-bound for Boston and New York had left Utica five minutes before we did. Telegrams flashed along the line explaining the situation, and begging the despatchers to stop the train that was bearing the Rochester club eastward.

Some one in the despatcher's office must have been a Chicago fan, for less than fifteen minutes after we stopped, an engine racing at top speed tore down upon us, and with a shower of sparks from the wheels slid to a stop. The Chicago car was cut out of the train, and with only one car to

drag the engine fled southward, seventy miles an hour, toward Utica.

Another engine, that had overtaken the east-bound train, had rescued the mis-sent Rochester car, and two minutes after we reached the Utica station it arrived. A moment later engines were changed. Good Old Bill said good night again, leaped on to the vestibule of the Rochester car, and was waving his hand as they raced northward just as we gathered speed and flashed through the edges of Utica in pursuit of the train waiting for us miles away.

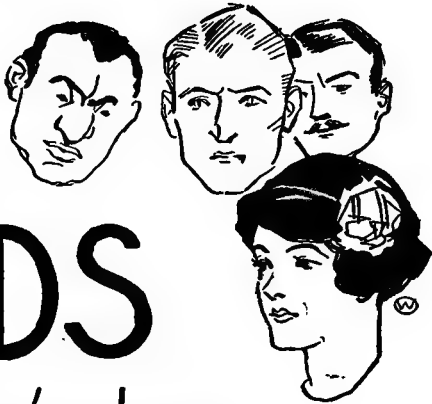
"Any more of that beer left?" inquired Sec, and the last bottle, deserted by Bill during the excitement, solaced him.

The plot was frustrated.

After all, it wasn't a plot. We learned the next day that the car in which we had

arrived in Rochester had broken down, so our possessions were transferred to the car meant for the Rochester team and a new car was found later to carry the Eastern Leaguers. Some one had forgotten to change the car numbers on the pick-up orders, and the conductors evidently figured all ball teams alike. Not one of the players of either team knew, until the next day, that they had nearly traded leagues during the night. Anyhow, I'll leave it to you if Good Old Bill and I and the ten bottles of beer (possibly more) didn't save that pennant for Chicago. Came near saving it for Rochester, too, but Baltimore beat them out. Don't blame Bill or the beer for that. Bill pitched eighty-seven games that season—eighty-three of them behind the grand stand, warming up.

THE WIZARDS



A Story of the Wireless

By Frank Blighton

CHAPTER I

"NOTHING BUT!"

FEW people ever get the feeling. So Glenn Howe, who had never had it until very recently, kept on trying to make it seem real. Outside, the crowd of Quaker City "boulevardiers" marched incessantly past the open window of the luxurious hotel in which

he was lunching. Their envious glances were actual enough; so was the deliciously nourishing food which the aristocratic waiter was bringing.

Glenn swallowed the soup gingerly, sipped the bottle of claret with precisely the right degree of calm appreciation, nibbled at the fowl as if "to the manor born," yet it was all very dreamlike.

When the three-dollar-and-sixty-cent check had been brought, and after he had

laved his fingers in the gilded bowl, he scribbled his initials on the check, topped it with a crisp dollar bill, received his hat from the salaaming flunky and strolled nonchalantly to the door.

"It's a mighty curious proposition," mused Glenn, as he walked out the Chestnut Street entrance of the Hotel Walbridge, unheeding the sumptuous decorations, oblivious to the magnificent toilets of the women who appraised him as he passed. He was so self-centered one would have thought from his careless bearing that he had never lived in any other atmosphere than that exotic luxuriance which engulfed any one who stepped from the tawdry reality of the street inside the great hostelry.

Glenn continued to ruminate on the queer turn in his life. As far back as he could remember, existence had been restricted. Now it had suddenly burst into an opulence at once enchanting and mystifying.

"I feel as if I'd always been a geranium," he muttered; "just like I'd always squatted in a little red pot, standing on the fire-escape or back window of some dingy tenement, with a stem dwarfed and gnarled—a poverty-stricken geranium that woke up one morning to find itself a stupendous orchid, rioting in a fifty-thousand-dollar hothouse, with a gardener that loved it better than his life."

The breeze of the perfect day swept up from the Delaware River in a bracing stream. The world looked good to Glenn, looked mighty good, although it might grow to look even better, if only this glowing, pulsating existence were not too suddenly shattered by a rude awakening.



"HELLO, Glenn. Gee, but I'm glad to see you, old man! You sure look as if you had both bread hooks stuck in the mint!"

The youth roused from his reverie and shoved out his hand impulsively.

"Why, Art Clark! Where did you drop from? Welcome home, prince of press agents. Come on down to my office, will you?"

"Your office?"

"Just a block farther on. We can smoke a cigar and have a little chin music all to ourselves there."

Arthur Clark looked at his friend with distended eyes.

"Say it over again, please, Glenn," he pleaded. "Use that oily, rich, Bostonese accent on it, too. It sounds very comforting to a gentleman of genius just about to go into cold storage!"

They both laughed. Howe slipped his arm through that of his friend and they kept on.

"Busted?" he queried.

"Going into voluntary bankruptcy, *pronto*. Available assets two collar buttons, a shoe horn and nineteen Class-A cinders that I'll pluck out of my shirt the moment I disrobe. The musical comedy company that I was with blew up in Erie. I'm shy six weeks' salary, and I fear me the impresario is training for the world's long-distance swimming-record somewhere between that burg and Detroit. At least the brakemen didn't find him on the rods when they ditched me. But come across with the tidings of great joy, will you? The last time I met you, you were a pedestrian for forty-two blocks in this fair city because a street-car conductor refused to take a sour look in place of a nickel."

They entered an impressive office building. Clark's eyes opened a little wider as the elevator man deferentially touched his cap when he opened the cage at the fourth floor. They entered a door marked "private," and before Howe shut off communication with the rest of the suite by closing another, the press agent saw that the room was connected with three beyond, all filled with busy clerks and waiting people.

He sank into a magnificently upholstered chair, crossed his legs and sized up the apartment. Then he whistled.

"Put me wise!" he grinned.

The other youth sat down at a desk piled high with correspondence, bristling with checks, money-orders and other forms of remittances used in the mails.

"Presently, Art," said he.

He pressed a buzzer. In answer, a light footfall crossed the room. Clark looked up. He gave a start of surprise.



"MISS HALL, let me present my very good friend, Mr. Arthur Clark," Howe was saying. "Miss Hall is my private secretary, Art, and she manages to keep the establishment on an even keel. You know I'm rotten at detail."

Clark arose mechanically, met the calm brown eyes that gazed into his own and

touched the slender hand that she extended to him.

"We—we've met before, haven't we?" he ventured.

"I've met many people," she smiled enigmatically. "Do you remember where?"

"I—I—don't, just now, but, you see, I've met a good many people myself," he stammered.

"Well," interpolated Howe, "the next time you meet you won't be in so much doubt as to the last time. And please remember, Miss Hall, that Mr. Clark is a preferred visitor at all times."

The girl bowed.

"Is there anything else, Mr. Howe?"

"Answer this correspondence, please, enter the cash and give me a statement of the bank balance after you have deposited it."

"There are several people waiting to see you, sir," she reminded.

"Tell them I'll be busy for an hour."

When the door closed behind the secretary, Clark sighed elaborately.

"Fire away, Johnny Rottenfellow," he yawned. "This suspense is tough on my heart—money and a girl like that! How do you do it? And who is the nifty little lady?"

"Answering your last question first, she's Sylvia Hall. But I thought you said you'd met before?"

"I had a dreamy hunch that we had. But she wasn't a stenographer—then."

Glenn Howe pushed over a box of imported cigars, rose from his seat, ensconced himself comfortably in another big chair, and puffed meditatively.

"About the coin—I wish I could tell you, Art," said he frankly. "But the fact is that I don't know myself."

The press agent straightened. "Don't know?" he echoed. "Why, that beauty-chorus person took real money out of here—huge, hexagonal wads of it. Mean to tell me you don't know where it comes from?"

"Not exactly." The youthful magnate puffed thoughtfully again. "Everything has to come from somewhere," he resumed. "So, of course, that money is no exception. It comes from people, like all money. But the uncanny thing about it all is this, Art: The thing they get for that money is simply a piece of paper. To be exact, a certificate of stock."

"Stock in what?"

"In an incorporated company, of course."

"But what assets does the company have? What business is it engaged in?"

"Now, there you rope my nanny, Art. You saw that money, didn't you? Yes, sure. And it was real money, wasn't it? Right again. I'm glad you confirm the evidence of my eyes. I've been expecting some one to wake me up, any minute."

"Oh, quit kidding, Glenn. You can't string me with any fludub like that. What makes the public disgorge?"

"Ain't it enough to freeze the saffron blood in the veins of a spineless ape, as Tom Lawson would say?" dreamily went on the man interrogated. "That money is something, Art. Most of us know how heavy a dollar is—a real dollar. And I'm getting dollars—slathers of them. Already they've raised me from poverty to comparative affluence. Yet the thing that those dollars are being exchanged for is something you can't see, can't feel, smell, hear or taste."

Clark was eagerly leaning forward. His keen, mobile face had lost a little of its cynicism. His eyes were no longer wide with wonderment. They were keenly intent on the powerful face of the man in the other chair. He realized that Glenn Howe was telling the truth, and he quivered like a thoroughbred at the barrier with desire to learn what was to follow.

"Yes," went on the speaker, "this intangible something can be harnessed. Already we have controlled it. We compel it to do our bidding when and where we will. It comes out of the nowhere, into the somewhere——"

"If the rest of the town could hear the way you pulled that, Glenn," grimaced the press agent, "even the cripples would gallop up these stairs to hear what's coming next."

A gentle rap fell on the door.

"Come in," called Howe testily.

"I beg your pardon," Miss Hall bowed her apology "but the printer is here with the proofs of those new stock certificates. He insists upon your O. K. for them—won't take mine. We need them badly, you know."

"Oh, well, wait here, Art. I won't be gone more than ten minutes."

Howe passed his friend and, as he left, Clark, with an impish smile closed the door behind him. The girl, hurrying back to her duties, looked up half angrily.

CHAPTER II

A FENCING-MATCH

"USUALLY," began the scribe, in his most magnetic manner, "I'm accounted a rather level-headed sort of a fellow, Miss Hall."

His slender, athletic figure was good to look upon, despite its obviously seedy appearance. Sylvia Hall, however, looked through the wrinkles and stains, and, with clear, candid eyes, scanned his. A faint flush of annoyance crossed her mobile face and contrasted sharply with the lustrous, dark mass of hair drawn plainly over her low forehead.

"Perhaps."

There was just the suggestion of malice in the one word which she uttered. But her mischievous smile healed the slight abrasion.

"Don't you think, in spite of that reputation, you have a rather sudden way of closing doors?"

"Maybe," ruefully assented the young man. "But it seemed such a good chance that I didn't stop to think how it might look. I hope I haven't offended you."

"I don't think I quite understand what you mean, Mr. Clark."

"Well, perhaps I'm only making application as an entered apprentice to the booby hatch."

Her eyebrows lifted more uncomprehendingly.

"You speak a language that I don't understand."

"Perfectly good American," shot back Clark, with a whimsical grin.

His embarrassment was vanishing.

"Then my education has been neglected."

She seemed to fall into the spirit of the situation and regarded him with quiet humor in her eyes.

"Well, maybe it did look queer. But I was only wondering whether we had really met before or if it were in another incarnation."

"Perhaps, as the impression seems to be so strong with you, we would better discuss the facts as you remember them."

"My ideas aren't very clear," he admitted, "or I wouldn't be bothering you. But I think it was one of the times I was tasting blood."

"How very ferocious! Do you often taste blood?"

Clark seemed a little piqued. "I—I—I mean it was one of the times when I was hitting the high spots."

She laughed.

"Did they have stenographers there—on the high spots?" she mocked.

"They did not," emphatically answered the other. "And you—that is, if it really were you—were not a stenographer, then," he concluded meaningly.

"Your memory seems to be getting clearer, Mr. Clark. Do describe this vision of the high places a little more explicitly, won't you? Perhaps I have a double. That would be very romantic, don't you think? Was she wealthy, beautiful, graceful, intelligent and all those other things the novelists ascribe to their heroines?" Her smile grew more tantalizing. "What was the *dénouement* of this affair to which you refer in such a mysterious way?"

"Pardon me," obstinately cut in the badgered one. "I can't let you run away with this thing with a josh. It's very serious, I assure you."

He paused and looked straight into her eyes. The laughter in their depths faded and died. It was her turn to become embarrassed.

"You see," he went on, "this happened quite a little while ago and you, if it really were you, were quite a bit more girlish."

She sighed sarcastically.

"Don't tell me that this theoretical person, whom you insist resembles me, has changed too much," she jeered. "Please don't tell me that her beauty is fading."



"I TOLD you I wouldn't let you kid me into forgetting it," obdurately rejoined Clark. "And I meant that, Miss Hall. No, she hasn't faded. She's only a little more womanly and even more attractive than when I met her—although when I first met her I couldn't see how she could ever be improved. It was at a ball—and she wasn't a stenographer. I danced with her. She was a *débutante*, winsome, vivacious—much the same as you would be now, I imagine, when you drop the mask of business. She was alive! Do you know what that means? Alive. And she didn't pretend to be staid and formal. She was natural—and unbelievably charming."

He paused to regard her narrowly again. As his glance swept her, she lowered her eyes.

"She was just your height, just your figure, except you may be a trifle more filled out now. She had that face of yours—only there wasn't that wisdom there then that there is now. She had that same hypnotic black hair, the same eyes——"

"If you'll kindly stand aside from the door, I'll go out long enough to get you my dictionary of synonyms," she laughed, "and then you can say it so much more effectively."

"—the same eyes; but she wore a ball gown, and flowers, and positively gorgeous jewels."

"Really?" She fumbled in the little purse at her belt. "Here's the key to my safe-deposit box, Mr. Clark. I can prove an alibi as to the jewels. There are only a few letters there, and my bank book. I hate to interrupt you, but I'm a business woman, and Mr. Howe pays me too well to waste his time. My hours for romance——"

"You're right, Miss Hall."

"Then, please let me go back to work."

"Just as soon as you've told me those 'hours for romance.'"

"Oh, you must remember I'm only a stenographer. They are mostly Sundays, and I generally go to church. Besides, you said this other heavenly girl had such gowns and jewels."

"They were merely accessories, I assure you," warmly returned the young man. "They adorned her, but they could add nothing to her—nor to you if you were really she."

"And if it really were I?" she challenged.

"If it really were you——" He broke off. "If it really were and if I really had a shawl strap full of ten-thousand-dollar bills——"

He leaped nimbly away from the door as the click of the knob signaled the return of Glenn Howe. As it opened, Miss Hall flitted back to her desk.

CHAPTER III

"HENRY BLUE BLEW"

GLENN HOWE was too much absorbed in his own thoughts to observe anything unusual. He began to pace back and forth across the office. His manner was taking on a new earnestness. He seemed to shake off his somnolent attitude. The nostrils of his rather large Grecian nose dilated

a little. His firm lips set in a thin line, and his sinewy hands were clenched as he thrust them into his pockets.

"You and I," he began with a snap, "have been a couple of go-get-'em newspapermen. I never heard of your falling down on an assignment and I know you never saw me come home without the bacon. That's what makes this story so hard. I've got to go beating around the bush with it, trying to make you understand something I'm trying to make seem real to myself. Am I tiring you?"

"Keep on tapping at that golden gong—but show me the bell rope when you ring off. I want just one jerk."

"All right. About fifteen months ago a clod-hopping, tobacco-chewing mountaineer named Henry Blue was trying to drive his ox team back home before a thunderstorm broke, down in the Blue Ridge country. They were a little slower than the lightning. It hit a tree a hundred yards from them. Two fine steers slipped out of the yoke without taking it off, and Henry kicked over in the sunflowers, looking for the mule which had handed him one. There was no mule. There were two dead oxen. Henry cursed around a little, took another chew and went home to think it over.

"There was a hundred-dollar bill that slid down that streak of lightning. It was tagged with your name. Here—take it."

Clark grabbed it.

"Keep me out in the rain all night, if you want to," he cackled.

"Now," went on his friend, "that hundred dollars really started for you right there. Henry Blue, if you'll pardon a bad pun, blew the Blue Ridge country. The neighbors kidded him to death, because he kept on insisting that while the lightning hit a hundred yards away from his oxen, something else hit both them and him. There was no other flash—just that one. Henry couldn't fight all the mountaineers, so he came up to Philadelphia, looking for a job."

"Did he get it?"

"He did. He went to work as an electrician. Henry was uncouth, profane and ignorant of books to a large extent. But in spite of all that, he was a genius. He started in reading up to find out what this thing was he called the 'mule kick of a thunderbolt.' No one knew much about such things. But he learned of other things. And he got busy in all his spare time, kept

busy and today you got that hundred-dollar bill as a retainer because Henry Blue's oxen were killed."

Clark pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

"Poor steers," he sobbed. "And I wasn't even at the funeral. Go on, blast you!"

"Today Henry Blue has fifty-seven patents granted for various original devices utilizing that 'mule kick.' Only he calls it now the Hertzian waves. He has a hundred other applications going through the patent office in one stage or another. One of them is a torpedo, controlled from the shore. Three Governments—all foreign—are negotiating for it—and Lord only knows how many others are trying to get it for nothing. Last night his shop was broken into and ransacked for plans. Fortunately Henry had all the important ones in his bedroom. Today he hired a safe-deposit box and engaged a bodyguard.

 "AND this—" Howe's hand swept grandly around the room — "this, Art, is only another phase of his wizardry. A little after you quit the paper, I met up with Richard Jeffray, an odd sort of a Pennsylvania Dutchman that used to eat at my boarding-house. We always argued politics. One night, when we were on the stoop of the house all alone, I said to him: 'Doc, I understand you have a degree from Jefferson. Are you in active medical practise?'"

"He shook his head. In his shirt was a diamond and he wore another in a ring. I conned him along a little farther. He told me how he had once organized a copper company in Arizona, and they had made good, although it seemed to surprise him. Then he sold Atlantic City lots—which the heartless tide sometimes flooded.

"'But now, Doctor, what are you doing?' I asked.

"'Now,' he replied, 'I have just gotten hold of the most wonderful thing in the world.'

"He took me down to look at it. It was a telegraph instrument, rigged up on a table to a contrivance he called a coherer. He went into another room and pressed a key. Something in there buzzed, and the sounder rattled. I carried the table up to the roof and then down to the sidewalk. Every time I heard that buzz, the sounder rattled."

Howe stopped short and looked at his friend. Clark nodded comprehendingly.

"Wireless?" he asked.

"Yes, wireless. The most unexplainable thing in the world, Art—something that makes the goose flesh prickle out all over me. That night, being only a reporter, I naturally scented a story. I asked Jeffray how far it would work. He declared they had sent dots for five miles. I suggested that he send a message from New Jersey into Pennsylvania—just across the Delaware. He said they couldn't make a dash, yet. I got around that by adapting the dot code used by Siberian prisoners. On the twentieth of September he spied this across the river, and I transcribed it at the Arch Street wharf: —

"The *Daily Eagle*,

Philadelphia, Pa.

"To the young giant of Quaker City journalism a new science sends greeting. JEFFRAY."

"Very nifty!" observed Clark, with an approving nod.

"It made a mighty good story—the first interstate wireless message ever sent, and exclusively to our paper," admitted the speaker. "I got a bonus of twenty-five dollars from the sheet, Jeffray kicked in with a like sum and I began to beat American Sugar to death in a bucket shop, carelessly cramming a twenty-five-share certificate of Universal Wireless, which Jeffray also included, in my hip pocket while I waited. Sugar, as it always does when I'm short, began to go up. I got a call for margins. I had no more coin for margins, so I offered the certificate. The bucket-shop man threw it on the floor. I was wiped out!"

He paused again, and resumed his seat after lighting another cigar.

"I had a long talk with Jeffray. He said their stock was picking up since the story. I told him a hundred-dollar share was too large a par value for an unlisted security. He was asking thirty dollars a share then and it was moving very slow. I suggested cutting the shares to ten, and making ten times as many, which he could sell for three dollars per share instead of thirty. I helped him with some literature. Then I hit on another plan. I thought of leasing out territory to subcompanies. He fell for that, too. He leased New England operative rights for ninety-nine years. The

fellows that took it paid him a thousand dollars cash. One fourth of their capital stock is in their treasury subject to his stock-dividend orders to holders of Universal Wireless. They agreed to pay ten per cent. of all their gross operating receipts to the parent company, besides buying nothing except Henry Blue's instruments for their territory.

"I've got Ohio, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and New York for the Commercial Wireless, another subcompany, on the same terms. What do you think of that?"

Clark knitted his brows.

"It looks good," he admitted.

"Good, Art? Why that twenty-five-share certificate on the new deal automatically grew to two hundred and fifty shares of ten dollars par value each. I sold it to a Diamond Street druggist for five dollars a share, used part of the coin to incorporate in South Dakota for ten millions, fitted up offices on the excitement plan—a hundred dollars down and take a chance. I've got twenty-seven thousand dollars in the bank, besides enough for this week's payroll. Don't owe a dollar. Even the rent is paid. How would you like to hook up with a live one?"

"I like the feel of it, very much." The press agent was caressing the hundred-dollar bill.

 "GO OUT and buy some clothes. Charge 'em to my account. Here's a card. Get a suite next to mine at the Walbridge. Don't spend any real money, Art—no potential millionaire ever does. Sign your checks when you eat, but be liberal with tips. I'll see you in the morning. There's a million dollars in real coin coming my way, and I'm willing to cut it if you can deliver the goods with some hot publicity. Beat it, will you, till I see that office full of folks waiting to swap legal tender for the nice-looking paper I've got in my safe?"

He pressed the buzzer under his desk, and Secretary Keefe entered. Art Clark, clutching the green and gold symbol of the shadow of happiness, stepped from the fairyland of finance into the weary world of fact, his brain in a daze.

Not until he had reached the haberdashery would his mercurial mind pause in its mad gyrations. The thing was so tremendous in its possibilities that he stag-

gered. And there was Sylvia Hall, mysteriously evasive, unconsciously enchanting.

"Talk about finding the end of the rainbow!" he ejaculated. "I'd rather tap a thunderstorm. Wonder how it is that after that hunch old Benny Franklin gave us with his kite no one ever got hep before to this scheme of quick rhino? And that girl—she's no stenographer. She's a duchess. Wonder which'll put me out—the duchess or the ducats?"

CHAPTER IV

THORNS AND ROSES

"I'VE got a peach of a line for an ad.," observed Arthur Clark next morning to Glenn Howe, president and general manager of "Commercial Wireless." "Have you been planning anything in that line?"

"That's what I want you for—to help me put this thing on a basis where we can make good," responded his friend. "We are getting money, but we need still more, to do what I want to do. If you don't mind, I'll give you the low-down dope of the thing, just as it stands today. Then we'll plan."

The press agent settled back in his chair, his sensitive face smoothing itself out as his receptive brain waited for the information. Receptivity was Clark's strong point—plus imagination. His was a bromo-seltzer sort of brain, but it never fizzed until the precise knowledge he lacked was added to the latent idea-secretions his brain cells ceaselessly incubated. When information met imagination, the reaction took place. So long as it continued there was nothing else in the universe worth considering—to Clark or any one within reach of his enthusiastic emanations.

"I'm up against a funny proposition," continued Howe. "Jeffray evidently wanted the Commercial Wireless in the field for purely selfish purposes. That's why he rebated to me privately, for past services, the thousand dollars cash he made every one else cough up for territory. I was number two company. The New England was first, as I said yesterday. After me came the Central Wireless, the Atlantic Wireless, the Inter-Mountain Wireless, the Pacific Wireless. The Southwestern, the Northwestern, and the Southern are still to come."

"Just a minute," interpolated Clark. "Why does he want so many companies? Wouldn't it be more advantageous to him to go on developing the territory himself?"

"You've never met Jeffray or you wouldn't ask. He isn't a big, constructive executive, Art. He's a speculator. With this Dutchman, it's a case of 'get the money.' He looks on wireless as a sort of a big fat goose that's flown over his fence. He's plucking the goose of its feathers and selling the goslings it hatches out. The goose itself signifies nothing to Jeffray. So he parts company with the goslings as fast as they chip the shell. See how clever he is—or thinks he is."

"I don't make it yet."

"Think for just a minute. Here's the Universal Wireless, his own company. It's the parent concern. All right. Eight operating-companies means a cash payment of eight thousand dollars, without the laying out of a dollar. Then, under the conditions of the contract, each company must pay over one fourth of its capital stock to him. Dutch uses this to declare 'Another Twenty-Five Per Cent. Dividend.' Here's one of his ads. See it?"

Clark studied the flamboyant newspaper clipping with real interest.

"I saw it before," he grinned. "But he fails to state that it is a stock dividend. If I'd been cuddling up a cozy bank roll, I suppose I'd have fallen for this, like the other boobies."

"You'd have gone to his office anyway. There Jeffray would show you a model machine which Henry Blue has built. It's a peach. Does stunts calculated to paralyze you. When you were properly impressed, he would flash on you what he calls 'the basic patent' taken out by an old scientist years ago. It has three years to run."

"Excuse me—I thought that Frenchman, Du Bosque, the warranted-not-to-rip-or-ravel baby in wireless."

"He's the only one that's ever done anything big," admitted Howe. "But, when he landed here and started American operations, Jeffray whanged him over the knob with an injunction, using this basic patent as the club. The case is in the courts now. Du Bosque can only work for demonstration purposes. That leaves Jeffray in control of the United States commercially—that is, in nominal control."

The other man nodded.



"NOW, see how this foxy doctor, without doing a thing except stall along, has got this situation sewed up: If the court upholds his injunction, Du Bosque is shut out of the country for three years to come; every prospective investor sees the big map in Jeffray's office, marked off in alluring red sections, each bearing the name of an actual or prospective subcompany. Each investor in Universal Wireless at ten dollars a share pulls down twenty-five per cent. of the same number of shares in each of these operative companies as a *bonus*."

"Jeffray shows him the contract agreements with all subcompanies to pay over to the Universal the ten per cent. gross of all operating-receipts, and there will be eight companies operating in the United States alone. Henry Blue's machines are pippins—selective vibrations unaffected by outside influences and all that. Then there is the contract to buy all operating-machines from him. Don't you see where he is heading in every man who comes to his office?"

"They're lashed to the mast for the mazuma they have with 'em, and will go out and rumple up the featherbed to get the rest of it," agreed Clark.

"Why, all Jeffray's got to do is to keep on selling feathers. He doesn't need to bother whether the goose ever lays an egg or not. It isn't up to him to earn the dividends. It's up to me and the other managers of operative companies. Now, how are we going to earn them?"

"In the good old way. Establish stations with machines and compete for the business commercially in your territory."

"Right. Now we're getting to the nub of the little problem, Art. I have ordered some machines from Jeffray. Do I get 'em? No. I get the privilege of bucking Jeffray for enough money to pay clerks and hire offices to fill his orders for bonus stock. He has just written me that 'it will be some time yet before we will be able to furnish you or any one else with machines—and the New England Company's previous order for one hundred of the contraptions must first be filled.'"

"Your gosling can't grow feathers for some time," sententiously observed the press agent. "What are you going to do?"

"I've got to fight Jeffray—not openly but secretly. I just went over that phony

contract of mine yesterday. I'm against the guns proper. There is no time stipulated in it for the delivery of any of the machines, except the words 'from time to time, upon payment in cash of the scheduled prices hereto annexed.' What would you do, Art?"

It was the press agent's turn to reflect. The situation was a curious one and, to a certain extent, was growing perilous. Here was an operating-company which could not operate. It was getting money on the first tidal wave of enthusiasm from well-meaning but credulous investors—investors blinded by the glitter of the possibilities of the wonderful new science, so hypnotized by the lure of big prospective profits that they had not yet paused to consider present-day actualities.

They could not go on forever taking in money on promises, promises which there was such a remote chance to transform into performances. Besides, Dr. Jeffray, unless something really worth while was started, would divert the funds of the investors to the parent company, notwithstanding the alluring advertisements of the operative subsidiaries.

It was great bait, Clark mused, eight subordinate concerns each paying in ten per cent. royalty of their gross incomes—theoretically amounting to eighty per cent. cash return on the average of the money any company secured from operating, before paying expenses. It made a most wonderful talking-point—eighty per cent. cash royalty to be applied to cash dividends on parent-company stock before the operative companies could even pay their operating-expenses surely sounded good—ininitely better than the prospect of dividends from the stock of the operative companies themselves.



"GENTLEMAN to see you, sir. Says it is very important. Can't come again."

Glenn Howe, restlessly pacing and repacing the floor of the office, took the card Secretary Keefe handed him. The youth went out again.

"What, is that hammerhead out there again? 'Sol Wertheimer, Manager *Money Trail*,'" he explained to the still musing publicity man, throwing the pasteboard in his direction.

"Art, here's another complication that I

hadn't got to yet. This is the rawest game that ever set up in Quakerdom. We might as well have it over with. I'm not going to stand for any shake-down, either," he grimly added. "I'm in this business to do just what I started out to do—build and operate this system of wireless communication. I won't let this company go by the board if I can help it, and I can't afford to be held up by any sharks. Now, I don't know this guy's game from his own lips, but he got to the New England people for a couple of thousand, and Dr. Jeffray, in spite of all his own cold-blooded schemes, was kind enough to warn me about him."

"Put up a plant on him," suggested the other. "Have him come in and let him talk his head off, but let's get some lunch, first. Gentle him along, then get him hard, the way they tame an outlaw cow pony."

"He's a smooth *hombre!*" ruminated Glenn, reaching for his hat. Art laughed, as they rose to go.

"If you get in too deep with him, let me try my hand," suggested Clark.

Howe's face lit up.

"That's the way to talk, Art. I had a hunch yesterday I needed you. Now I'm sure of it."

He pressed the buzzer and whispered the instructions to the secretary, as they flitted through the private door.

"Sit down, Mr. Wertheimer." The young president's greeting was just affable enough to indicate he had lunched well but still was thoroughly matter-of-fact. "What is the nature of your business with me?"

The oily-faced visitor twisted his deep-set, porcine eyes toward the other visible occupant of the room. His fat jowls hung over the edge of his immaculate collar, one pudgy hand shot eagerly out toward the tempting cigar which Glenn Howe extended.

"It's confidential," he warily announced. "I'd rather talk to you alone," he suggested, laying down a bundle of newspaper proofs and a dozen sheets of typewriting on the table as he sank heavily into the chair. "I've been waiting for some time to see you alone," he wheezed.

His overfat body seemed relieved as it snugly fitted into the Turkish rocker, and his sensual lips tried to draw themselves into a businesslike expression.

"I don't exactly understand you. Do you mean a personal matter, or one to do with my company? I don't recall ever

meeting you before," easily answered the president.

"The company, of course," leered the visitor, with a cunning expression. "And it's worth while, at least I think it is," he importantly concluded.

"Anything about the company is important, if worth while," agreed Glenn. "However, this gentleman is in my most intimate confidence. Anything requiring my judgment would have to be considered by him as well as myself, and we will save the time needed to repeat it if you care to tell it to both of us. I am very busy," he concluded pointedly.

"Aw, all right. Now my newspaper runs a confidential-advice bureau for intending investors," went on Wertheimer, laboriously drawing a bundle of letters from an inside pocket. "Here's a man in Harrisburg asks me about you, here's another from Altoona, one from Chester, one from Pittsburgh—no, two from Smokytown—and a lot of other suckers are writing in every mail, all reading your ads., all asking our opinion. I want to get some data in shape to send them."

"Glad to oblige, I'm sure," purred the president. "It is very kind of you to go to all this trouble on our account. Where shall we begin?"

"Aw, I ain't runnin' an orphan asylum," smirked the manager. "I guess we won't have any difficulty, though. The New England people come across handsome, and I guess you'll find it to your advantage to follow."

"Such as——"



"JUST a minute. Don't get ahead of the cars, kid."

Wertheimer fumbled with the papers on the table after replacing the letters in his pocket.

"Here's a little article I jacked into type to save time," he went on, pulling out a pair of nose glasses, and twisting in the chair until his back was toward the rest of the pile, on which Arthur Clark's eyes, glinting with sudden fire, had abruptly focused.

"In this we tell about your capitalization, the territory in which you operate, the population, the need for competitive telegraphic systems, your own probity as a business man and the flattering prospects for success which you have. I also mention the fact

that, following the example of old-style telegraph companies, each block of territory is subdivided into States to facilitate handling the business of each section, thus showing the careful way the plan is being worked out."

"May I look it over?"

The words fell mechanically from Glenn Howe's lips as he extended his hand. He cared little for the actual contents of that proof sheet, but the warning light in Clark's eyes and the stealthy reach of the press agent's hand forced him to distract the visitor's attention for a moment more.

For Clark was deftly filching another document from the pile on the table.

CHAPTER V

A VULTURE

"SURE!" heartily assented Wertheimer, removing his glasses and extending the document.

Howe scanned it. It was the usual type of florid stuff, not specifically committing the paper to anything, although the only impression which could be drawn from it was that of a rather flamboyant send-off of the company and its officers.

"It is very kind of you," said the president, returning it. "If every newspaper in the state with an investment department would do as much for us on such inquiries as they receive, we would soon have all our stock placed and be establishing stations all over Pennsylvania."

Wertheimer wriggled uneasily. Things seemed to be going much smoother than he had anticipated. But the way this self-possessed young man kept putting the lead back into his own hands made his approach rather hard.

"Let me read it, please."

The press agent smiled affably as he ran over the paragraphs.

"Good stuff, Glenn. You ought to make this gentleman a present of a few shares of stock for this boost."

Wertheimer wrenched himself about so he could look first at one and then at the other. He held up a deprecatory palm.

"Nix on the stock," said he incisively. It was the opening for which he had been waiting. "I ain't got any time to peddle your paper. That's your game, gents. All I want is to do business. I can put this

over for you in five thousand copies of the regular edition of the *Money Trail*, and print you five thousand extra to mail around—just as the New England Company did—for one thousand dollars down and one thousand more in sixty days.”

He spoke very rapidly. Howe seemed to consider. Really he wanted to be sure that Clark could decide whatever he was planning before he started to reply. Clark, however, after an ominous pause, rose quickly to his feet and crammed the paper into his coat pocket.

“We will take the matter under advisement,” said he brightly. “I am handling the publicity work, Mr. Wertheimer, and I regret to say that this month’s appropriation is so nearly exhausted that I would be ashamed to offer you the small sum yet unexpended. Besides, it’s already contracted for in the modest space we have been using.”

Wertheimer wilted a little, but only for a moment.

“When will you let me know?” he demanded.

“I will retain this write-up, if you have no objection,” smoothly continued Clark, “and present it to a special meeting of the board of directors within ten days. They must also pass on it. Everything, you understand, goes through their hands.”

“Can’t wait that long.” The visitor’s fat jowls wobbled over the white collar as he shook his head. “Besides, there’s these inquiries.”

 “I DON’T see how we can hasten the matter,” went on the press agent, tipping a warning wink to the president as he kept up his walk. “We certainly can not draw unauthorized checks—that isn’t the way this company is run. As for the inquiries, that’s easy.”

He paused as he walked, evidently repressing something which was boiling up inside his muscular figure. The knots in his pockets showed his hands were clenched.

“What do you mean by ‘easy’?” Wertheimer did not relish the objections which he could not answer. “How am I going to answer these letters?”

“Why,” flashed back Clark, “I thought that had already been settled.”

“Settled?”

Wertheimer’s puzzled expression was growing broader. He gazed hard at the lithe figure of the press agent, whose face had lost its smile.

“Why, of course. You come in here with the answer all written out—and more than that, set up in print. What’s to hinder your answering those letters the same way you wrote the article—until we get a chance to pass on it?”

The visitor laughed. It was a jarry sort of a laugh, and it rasped unpleasantly through the office.

“Write those rubes, boosting your game before I get my cut?” he sarcastically queried. “Say, kid, I wasn’t born yesterday. Here I’m offering you a boost at—”

“At twenty cents a copy for a paper that sells for ten,” cut in Clark.

“Well, you couldn’t buy the white paper for that, alone,” snarled Wertheimer. “What’s the matter? Don’t you know I can kill this thing if I start in to hammer it?”

“Possibly.”

“Possibly? It’s a cinch.”

“Then we are to understand, Mr. Wertheimer—”

“Understand nothing. I’m here to do business. If you don’t want to, say so. If you’ve got any other proposition, make me an offer.”

“As I said,” suavely continued Clark, “we will be glad to consider this. If we accept, you’ll get a letter with a check. If we decide otherwise, you’ll hear from us with the article enclosed.”

Wertheimer rose from his seat. He was oozing perspiration. His face was purple with suppressed fury.

“Well,” he snarled, “I won’t answer for what will happen till then. I’ve given you a chance—”

 HE STOPPED speaking abruptly. Clark whirled, struck him a terrible blow on the point of his jaw, and the beefy visitor went to the Persian rug so suddenly that he could only lie there, pawing at the pattern with his pudgy hands. Finally he pried himself again erect.

“I’ll wreck you for this!” he hissed venomously.

“If you print a word against this company, we’ll slam you in the ‘hoose-gow’ for life,” laughed Clark.

“Will you? People like you have tried that before,” scoffed the fat one. “I’ll show up this fraud company of yours—running on wind, bilking people out of their hard-earned coin. Why, you can’t even show a working machine—and you’re

an operative company! I'll get the postal inspectors after you! As for your threats of arrest, why, all I've got to say is that I came here looking for information for clients. You insulted me. You assaulted me. And you can't deny it. Then you try to put me in jail!"

Wertheimer's brain, accustomed as it was to distorting every situation into a club for his financial benefit, spewed out the ideas as if he were inspired. He became positively eloquent.

"Oh, I think not," laughed Clark. "There are two of us, you know. And we have good memories. All we will need to do is recite your disappointment at failing to shake us down the way you did New England Wireless."

"So?" sneered Wertheimer. "Well, little one, you're an interested party, ain't you? One of the firm? And your friend is president? What do you suppose a jury will say to your stories? Of course you wouldn't do anything but give a man the worst of it in court, after he'd showed you up, eh? There may be two of you, but I'll make you think there's a dozen of me. Where's your corroboration to your yarn?"

"Right here!" came the melodious answer.

Wertheimer gasped as Sylvia Hall slipped from behind the screen in the corner, notebook in hand.

"I took it all," said she, proudly shy under the approving gleam in Clark's eyes. "It was a little hard, when you were both yelling at once. But I can transcribe it, word for word!"

"All tarred with the same stick!" grunted Wertheimer, now fumbling over his papers on the desk. "You work here, too. Of course it was all a plant, from the start!"

Sylvia did not appear to hear him. As if unconscious of the presence of any one but the president, she looked and spoke at him alone.

"I thought you might need the record, although you did not mention it," went on Sylvia. Her level tone had resumed its dispassionate quality. "So I came in anyway. If you wish, I'll transcribe it right away, Mr. Howe. My other work is well in hand for the day."

"Do so," said the beaming president.

"I've got your number," quietly observed the press agent to the caller. "It's twenty-three. On your way."



CLARK threw wide the door leading to the hall, as Wertheimer still fumbled for his hat and papers.

The knave's purple face went a pasty white.

"Where are the rest of my papers?" he demanded.

"Oh, you mean the roasting article?" sneered Art. "Well, Mr. Wertheimer, it happens just now that it's in my inside pocket. Presently, with the conversation which Miss Hall had the forethought to take down, and this other artistic boost of yours, it will be on its way to the district attorney's office. You're out of the publishing business. The star part in that rustic drama, 'Love's Labor Lost,' will require all your attention from now on. As soon as the stage is set, your long engagement will open."

He rushed the visitor through the door. There was a crash. Then Clark returned, and deliberately washed and dried his hands before speaking.

"If that blackmailing buzzard ever comes back here again, I'll kill him," he observed quietly. "Glenn, we've got the world by the tail with this proposition. Say, Glenn, I'm boiling! While that lobster was trying to hand us the big mitt, I got the whole thing."

He strode over to the president's chair and clutched him by the shoulder.

"We're going to report the yacht races next September. We'll clean 'em up—and unload. That's the big idea, Glenn."

"I'd like to, old man, but where'll we get the machines?"

"We'll get 'em."

"You're forgetting Dr. Jeffray, and the contract."

"No, I've been thinking of him—thinking hard. We might as well lick him, now that we've started to fight, Glenn. Get him on the 'phone, will you?"

CHAPTER VI

THE LAW AND THE PROFITS

"VAT iss it?"

Dr. Jeffray's extraction tintured his query, as he and Henry Blue came into the Commercial Wireless office to meet the president and his chief adviser.

"We want to do something, Doctor," began Glenn, very quietly, "besides blarney

along the people whose money we're getting. To do anything we need machines. We must have them. That's why I asked you and Mr. Blue to come over for this chat. What may we expect—and when?"

"I don't know."

Jeffray waited for an answer. His face was set in obdurate lines.

"If you were in our place, would that answer be satisfactory, Doctor?"

President Howe was very calm. He had determined to remain unruffled, no matter what provocation arose during the interview.

"The contract does not bind us to any time of delivery." Jeffray sparred cautiously, for he scented trouble.

"And therefore," suggested Clark urbanely, "it becomes an equitable question—one which the court must determine from a consideration of all the equities involved in the contract."

"Who are you?"

The Universal Wireless executive shot out the query none too kindly.

"I'm Mr. Howe's friend, associate and adviser," continued Clark. "Before taking any legal action as to the merits—or demerits—of this document, we thought you'd appreciate an opportunity to talk matters over."

"What is there to talk over?"

"A good deal, Doctor."

Clark's assured tone was ominously even.

"The stockholders of the Commercial Wireless have a right to the proper expenditure of their money—a right that no one can deny them. They have paid into this office nearly thirty thousand dollars in cash in sixty-four days. How much longer have they to wait?"

"Ve are doing the best ve can," asserted Jeffray, puffing contemplatively at his cigar. "Mr. Blue is vorking night and day. He can't turn out machines faster than he is doing now. It is a new science, and progress is slow."

"Yet, if you are haled into court, you can't make that kind of an answer, Doctor—not with your own concern capitalized at ten millions of dollars, and eight other sub-companies, whose stock you are peddling as dividends, with a capital of eighty millions more. That," emphatically went on the press agent, "would be suicide."

"Who is going to take us into court?"

"We won't discuss that, for a moment.

We hope it may be avoided. That's why we are talking with you. Ninety millions of money, Doctor Jeffray, is some coin. It is more than the combined capital of the old, established wire-using telegraph concerns; much more."

"Vell?"

The inquiry carried a subtly insolent undertone.

"You have eighty millions of that ninety millions of capital stock in your eight subsidiary companies, which must be operating before the people who buy parent-company stock can get a penny of cash return." Clark consulted his memoranda. "That means they must take in together at least twenty-one thousand nine hundred and seventeen dollars per day. None of them have any machines. It seems to me, Doctor, that the matter is one which merits your consideration."

"Ve vill keep plugging along, und ven de machine is perfected ve vill increase our facilities as fast as ve can find competent vorkmen."

Clark laughed. He scribbled on the paper before him, and then launched another barb.



"YOU have been incorporated over one year, now, Doctor. I am told you have one machine in your office that works beautifully. One machine in one year means it will be one hundred years before the New England Wireless gets its order filled. We are next in line. Rather long wait, don't you think?"

Jeffray pounded on the table, his excitable temperament throwing him clear of the phlegmatic orbit he had been so carefully assuming.

"Vell, vot of it?" he roared. "Didn't I jüst told you——"

"You did." There was something in the terse incisiveness of the other man's interruption that caused Henry Blue to forget to puff his cigar. "And now I'm going to tell you one or two things—for your own good, Doctor."

He thrust his keen-eyed, mobile countenance across the table with an abruptness that was startling. Jeffray hunched back in his chair, glowering and vengeful.

"Some men can't bear to be told the truth, unless they get an alternative that's worse than what they hear," continued Clark. "I'm going to make a statement and

you can do whatever you like. Mr. Howe doesn't propose to be used for another minute to pull your financial chestnuts out of the fire. He wants machines. If you don't supply them on his formal demand, which our attorneys will serve this afternoon, he will proceed to build them according to the patent specifications which Mr. Blue has filed in Washington." He waited a moment for the statement to sink in.

"Now, here's the alternative, neatly typewritten. It's an article which a black-mailer brought in here a few minutes ago. I knocked him down. That article will be printed—undoubtedly—unless you accede to our proposal. You can't disprove a word of it. Unless you kick in with a bunch of hush money, marked copies of that paper will probably be sent to the postal authorities at Washington. Then you will have the privilege of explaining to the Government in court, following your indictment, how you came to be running a paper mill instead of keeping faith with the people they charge you with deluding. That's all, for the present."

Jeffray and Blue perused the article together. The quality of the phrases and their ingenious comparisons seemed to make an impression. The Doctor, in particular, was somewhat chastened as he turned to speak again, for he saw his paper profits melting before the flaming onslaught of the law.

"But vot can ve do?"

"Sign this." The paper came fluttering over the table. "Then apply for a warrant of arrest for Sol Wertheimer the moment he puts up his proposition. I'll attend to the balance of it—in a way to warm the cockles of your heart."

"You vant us to give you permission to build machines vith vvhich to report the yacht races this Fall?"

"Yes."

"Dat isn't such a bad idea," ruminated the executive. "But ve ourselves can hardly get them ready in time. You haf no idea how difficult it is."

"Haven't I? Everything worth doing is rather hard, isn't it, Doctor? But I happen to have an ace in the hole. Some day I'll show it to you."

"Dis provides dat you only build dose machines, und pay us our den per cent. yust de same?" cautiously queried Jeffray as he drew out his pen.

"It modifies the original agreement to enable us to build any machines as fast as we need them, if you can not deliver them on schedule. On those machines you get no payments of any kind. Otherwise the whole agreement as to royalties holds."

Glenn Howe blotted the paper carefully and put it in his safe.

"Thank you, Doctor," said he. "I'll send you a certified copy for your own files tonight. I think that is all."

"Now, Mr. President," resumed the press agent, executing a *pas seul* when the door had closed behind the two men, "seeing that we've played a double-header and won twice today, if you'll provide me with two hundred real iron men—Uncle Sam's best brand—I'll beat it for Boston. Meanwhile, I'll telephone the hotel to send my bag to the station."

"Meaning——"

"We're going to start reporting that yacht race today—although it isn't scheduled for two months. Hurry!"

CHAPTER VII

THE GIRL OR THE GOLD?

FOLLOWED busy days. Arthur Clark was everywhere, energized everything. He brought back with him from Boston an expert in applied electrical research, to wit: Curtiss, Professor Joshua R. Curtiss. The professor reflected outwardly the spirit of the historic city where he had been found. Inwardly, he grappled with the problems before him, devouring difficulties which mastery of the new science presented. Glenn Howe gave him *carte blanche*. In three days Curtiss had secured the supplies which he needed for the construction of operating-machines to report the international yacht races and hired his two assistants, Matthew Marr and "Babe" Brown.

For fifty of the sixty days that preceded the race they fought to achieve the impossible, Curtiss dryly remarking that it was a condition and not a convenient excuse that confronted him.

"That's the system!" bubbled the effervescing press agent. "If any one else told you three mutts that you couldn't do a thing, you'd all be as sore as poisoned pups. Go to it and my blessing, little children. I'm going out to hire a fine yacht

for you to work on and do a little mining on the side in the pockets of the common people for the iron men you'll be eating up."

With wonderful versatility he bent to his own tasks. They were onerous ones. But Clark was a genius when it came to interesting people. For years he had interested editors in himself and people in the snappy, exhaustive news stories which he turned in on the assignments which he covered. Far into the night he devised plans for the next day. He took up the burden of detail, sent men to erect stations at two points on the Jersey coast, from which he looped land wires to send the race news; he dictated orders for equipping and provisioning the *Luella J. Lucas*, a two-masted schooner which had been in the West India fruit trade; saw to it that all stockholders received comprehensive letters as to what was being done and the object which the company expected to attain; prepared advertisements for the newspapers; wrote new literature to interest those replying; and through it all kept a wary eye out for the activities of one Sol Wertheimer, whose arrest had followed on a charge of attempted blackmail.

Notwithstanding, Arthur Clark also made time for a half hour daily with Sylvia Hall. Under pretense of dictating advertisements, literature or personal letters to stockholders, he basked in the aura of her personality. It not only diverted him but he admitted to himself that he found her charming.

It soothed him to drop into the quiet of the private office after a restless, trying day, and look into those fathomless brown eyes of hers, wondering whether or not she really were the girl he had known and loved in the long ago, and, strangely enough, whose name he did not know.

Clark was too much of an innate gentleman to presume on his relation as quasi-employer, however. He was strictly businesslike and the girl was as seriously devoted to the welfare of the company. She seemed to take a vital interest in the success of the enterprise, and often dropped some hint which he found helpful.

One Sunday he called and escorted her to church and home again. But the time and the place were not conducive to the "hours for romance" which Art longed to see arrive and which he planned to hasten. During the week it required all of his effort

to keep the enterprise steadily forging ahead. He promised himself a little relaxation before the race, but even this was denied him.



THREE weeks after Wertheimer had been held in heavy bail to await the action of the grand jury in the Fall, a prosperous-appearing, determined and very angry man raged into the office, demanding to see the president.

Glenn Howe was away that day and Clark took the visitor in charge.

"My name is John Worthington," began the irate one. "I'm from Pittsburgh. I bought a lot of stock in this now-you-see-it-and-now-you-don't shebang, and I've come to demand my money back again."

"Won't you sit down?" asked the press agent.

"I don't want any talk. I want my money," shouted the wrathful fellow.

"Well," began Clark in his crispest manner, "perhaps you'll get it if you really do and perhaps you won't. At least bullying and yelling around this office won't help you to cash in any sooner. If you care to act sensibly, you won't find us unreasonable. Take that chair, please."

Mr. Worthington concluded that the advice was good. He took the seat, and glared at the imperturbable youth opposite.

"How much stock have you?" began Clark, tendering a cigar, which the visitor took reluctantly.

"I put in one thousand dollars when it was ten cents a share. I didn't know it was crooked, then."

"Very well. Do you know that Commercial Wireless is off-color in any way now?"

"I have reasons to think that it is."

"Would you mind disclosing them?"

The visitor shook his head obstinately.

"I won't talk over a thing I've made up my mind about," he declared. "I want my money."

"Well," reflected the Grand Vizier of the corporation, "I suppose it is all in the point of view. If you said to me that you needed this money which you had invested when our stock was selling so low, and had to have it, I think I could arrange the matter for you. In fact, I know I could turn it in an hour at a better figure and make a handsome personal profit. But when you come in here with imputations of criminality in

the way we run our business, I hope you'll have sense enough to realize that's a different thing—entirely. If I gave you this money because you use threats, wouldn't that be practically an admission that you were right and that we were a lot of crooks?"

Mr. Worthington knitted his shaggy eyebrows. His homely face wrinkled in thought. It was an old-fashioned face, the face of a man who had toiled hard for his accumulations, and it breathed honesty in every care-worn wrinkle.

"I don't know but you're right about that," he acquiesced.

"Exactly," interpolated Clark. "Now, Mr. Worthington, just one more word. We are not a nest of crooks. We are young men with a big thing and we are honestly trying to make good. But that is no concern of yours, beyond the fact that it was some such supposition which induced you to invest, wasn't it?"

Worthington nodded.

"Hence, if the information which you think you have is not correct, you are the loser, not we. Now—" he pressed the buzzer under his desk—"I suppose you can't afford to lose this thousand. Therefore, I'm going to have a check drawn to your order for that amount."



SOME one was tapping timorously on the door. "Come in," called Arthur Clark.

Sylvia Hall fluttered into the room.

"Miss Hall, this is Mr. Worthington, of Pittsburgh," went on the press agent. "Some one has given him information that makes him fear he will lose his money in our concern. Will you draw a check for this amount, go to the Walbridge where Mr. Howe is lunching and have him sign it? Tell him I will explain the details."

The girl went white. Even her lips showed the shock.

"It is nothing alarming," continued Clark. "In fact, I'm glad it happened. Some one has been sending out crooked reports about our company, and I'm going to the bottom of the thing. Do this, please, without delay."

He turned to the man again.

"Now, Mr. Worthington, before I show you just what we are doing and why, will you not be as frank with me as I have been honorable with you, and tell me where you got this information?"

"I will," replied the other man. "I got a letter from a broker named Wertheimer, advising me to investigate the concern."

"Ah!" breathed the man behind the desk. "Did you know him before you sent in this money?"

"No."

"Did you write asking him for a report on our company?"

"Never had any dealings with him, one way or t'other."

"How did he know that you had any stock in the company?"

"Haven't an idea."

"Well, I thank you for what you have told me, anyway. Let's go over to the laboratory. We are building the machines there to report the yacht races, and one of them is set up. It has an operating range of five hundred miles, I'm told."

Sylvia was waiting for them when they returned. She gave Arthur Clark the check as he reëntered.

"Here's your money." He handed it to the man, who was waiting.

"Now, if you'll just sign this receipt and write your name on the back of the certificate, Mr. Worthington, I will wish you success and bid you good day."

"Young fellow, you keep that check," exploded the stockholder. "This stock looks good enough for my thousand dollars, and then some. I like the way you do business and I'm only sorry my little store out home ain't big enough to take some more of the same stuff at the price it now sells for. Good-bý, sir."

Clark summoned Sylvia and handed her the check.

"Mr. Worthington changed his mind," said he. "Wertheimer was at the bottom of the thing, as I supposed. But he never wrote him, he says, and don't even know how Wertheimer learned he was a stockholder. There's something crooked out in that office, Miss Hall."

The girl's pallor struck him as odd. But he attributed it to the distress which the incident had created.

"I wish you would look around a little, and let me know if you find out who is to blame. We can't fight unknown traitors inside the fortifications, you know."

"No," she admitted faintly. "Mr. Howe will not be back today," she continued, regaining her self-control. "He said not to wait for him. He was rather put out at the

idea of giving up the thousand dollars, but told me to tell you whatever you decided was all right."

"Watch him do a jig when I hand him the check in the morning," laughed Clark. "Brace up, Miss Hall. They haven't got us over in the tall pigweeds yet, nor will they, until the doctor hands me a round trip to the dippy ward. Do you get me?"

"I think I understand," laughed the girl, her face radiant again.

"You're improving," grinned the press agent.



WHEN she had gone, he smoked a while, reveling in the thought of her sweet wholesomeness, glorifying the womanhood which she revealed in spite of their business relationship. There came to him the memory of that long-ago night, when, to the languorous strains of "The Blue Danube," he had folded close that younger woman, whom she so strongly recalled in all save wealth and social standing. Once more he experienced the exhilaration of the moment when the sweet compulsion of love softens the dreary road of life.

When he roused from the realm of things as he would have them be to the world of things as they are, he was hungry. He whisked into his coat with a start of surprise.

"Gee! Eight o'clock! Why, I'm getting as moody as an old maid. Parrots next, a cat and black tea. Beware, Arthur. Also get headed for a feed foundry, ere you flop from weakness."

Clark did not feel like waiting to go to the Walbridge. There he would be forced to dress, and dress meant more delay. He whirled round the corner and entered a Bohemian restaurant, where a Hungarian orchestra livened the atmosphere for the diners. Booths were ranged along the walls, and one of these he entered.

He ordered, and gave himself up to the delightful rhythm of the "Hungarian Rhapsody." As he waited, in one of the softer movements of the selection he heard voices. Something in the unctuous timbre stiffened him in his chair. The next instant his ear was glued to the partition between his booth and the one beyond.

"Well, did he give Worthington his money?" queried a voice which Clark recognized as Sol Wertheimer's.

"Yes," came the feminine rejoinder, with

a quiver of plaintive sorrow which bit deep into the listener's brain.

"But he gave it back again," resumed the voice of—Sylvia Hall.

Wertheimer's brutal guffaw jarred through the room.

"Wait till those other people come down on them. I sent the same letter to all the names you gave me. Just wait!" He chortled again.

Arthur Clark suddenly lost his appetite. He beckoned the waiter, paid the check, slipped into his coat and peered in at the half-open curtains of the booth where Wertheimer sat opposite Sylvia Hall.

For a moment they did not perceive him. Then Wertheimer shrank back into the corner under the ferocious glare of Clark's blazing eyes. Sylvia Hall's face went white again—the same strangely unaccountable pallor that it had worn during the afternoon, the young man bitterly thought. Now he understood the reason for that pallor.

He turned to look at her squarely. But there was none of the covert affection which had always before brooded in the press agent's eyes—only misery unutterable and contempt profound.

Wearily he walked to the hotel. Leaving word that he was not to be disturbed, he went to bed. Next morning, as he was sleeping restlessly after a wakeful night—a night of bitterness toward everything and every one—Glenn Howe came into his room.



"HELLO, Art!" greeted the president. "Isn't it time you were up? Say! What the devil do you think of this?" He held up a special-delivery letter. "Miss Hall has resigned; says she's called away on very important business. Gee! I wonder who I'll get to take her place. She was a paragon, Art—absolutely loyal, thoroughly competent, and the way you've been shining up to her—well, I guess you appreciated her as much as I did, didn't you?"

"I certainly thought a great deal of her," admitted his friend. "It never rains but it pours, you know."

He rose when Glenn went back to his own room, and began dressing. A cynical smile was on his handsome face as he turned on the shower.

"Which will I fall for, the duchess or the ducats?" he mused. "The ducats, old boy—the ducats! You can buy a duchess any-

time. At least that's the way things look this morning. But you can't swap busted hopes or two-faced dames for even a sinker when you feel that food is still necessary to prolonging existence."

CHAPTER VIII

OUT OF TUNE

PROFESSOR JOSHUA R. CURTISS unwrapped his long legs, and gazed at the clattering tape which was unwinding in the wireless station at Jeddo-by-the-Sea.

"What do they say at Judah?" asked Matthew Marr, his first assistant.

"O. K. Get you without a break. Good-by. Going to lunch."

"O. K. Good-by," clattered Marr at the sending-key, closing the switch.

"Fine billiards, Glenn," announced Arthur Clark, springing to his feet. "I call that going *some*—even for two such high-power personalities as the Shah of the Commercial Wireless and his Grand Vizier, meaning myself. The yacht race is ten days off yet—and we seem to have beaten Pa Time to a fine white froth with these two stations in shipshape. Now if Babe Brown comes up to the scratch with the *Luella Lucas* ready to sail around by Cape May, we've almost got that million bucklets buckled into our belt."

"We have been going a little for six weeks' work," acquiesced the president. "I hope our ideas regarding this new tuning-apparatus are justified. It won't do to have interference when we start to send in the news of the contest between the *Shamrock II* and the *Columbia*. Between you and me, my legs have been a little weak since Jeffray's cablegram from Ireland that Du Bosque's directors refused to coöperate with us. That means they'll try to put it over alone."

"Leave it to the distinguished Professor Joshuay," retorted the irrepressible press-agent. "When I get to hammering that key on the *Luella*, if these scientific sharps make good, why it's the coroner for Du Bosque's crowd—and the verdict will be, 'Hopes murdered by etheric vibrations.'"



GLENN laughed and strolled outside. The little cottage, within a stone's throw of the high-tide mark, looked over the wide expanse of the mighty

Atlantic from the Jersey coast. Fifty miles farther down the coast another installation had been made at Judah, to guard against possible mishaps during the second struggle to lift the coveted cup by Sir Thomas Lipton.

The one-hundred-and-fifty-foot pole, carrying the five-strand insulated wires, swayed in the fresh wind, and the breeze hummed soothingly through the network just above the cottage roof.

Commercial Wireless had been striving to justify the faith of the stockholders. Art Clark's broadside in the newspapers that they would report the international yacht race had brought a flood of stock-buying orders. His quick jump to Boston and the engagement of Professor Curtiss had borne fruit. Under Curtiss's tutelage, two skilled mechanics had made more machines and better machines of the Blue type in one month than Jeffray had built in a year.

Thanks to Blue's superior method of causing the coherer to decohere magnetically, extremely rapid messages had been possible, and the operation of the two stations along shore over a distance of fifty miles, using a printing tape for greater accuracy, had demonstrated the entire practicability of reporting the yacht race, so far as human ingenuity could foresee.

That achievement meant much to Commercial Wireless. There had been plenty of problems, aside from those of the machines themselves, for the company to battle with. Sol Wertheimer, piqued at his dual arrest for attempted blackmail, had organized his fight to impair confidence in the company along relentless lines.

Not only had his schemes driven Sylvia Hall away, but every advertisement of Commercial stock had been followed by a score of petty announcements, fathered by him, to the general effect that the same security could be obtained more cheaply elsewhere. Following the usual plan of industrial securities of an unlisted character, Clark had from time to time advanced the selling price of Commercial Wireless, as proportionate progress was made, from ten cents for each share of the par value of one dollar to fifty cents.

There he had allowed it to remain until the yacht race should be reported and the practical character of the invention assured. It was perfectly natural, therefore, for many of the original buyers, some of them

influenced by alarming rumors artfully set afloat by Wertheimer's friends, to try to unload on the advancing market.

Clark battled with the ghouls desperately. Sometimes he grew sick at heart as he thought of Sylvia. But he had no time to brood over past sorrows, when every day saw some new exigency develop. He increased his space in all local papers, but with the understanding that no advertisements in the same periodical offering his stock at lower figures should appear the same week. As he spent a hundred dollars for every one of the outsiders', this was not difficult.

Wertheimer was both cunning and desperate. His indictment at the Fall term of court was probable. No one but he and the bondsmen knew that the bail securing his freedom temporarily would be forfeited in case of an indictment, and that it would be found worthless. So he tried a new tack.

After Miss Hall's mystifying resignation, it was comparatively easy for him to secure a list of the stockholders of Universal Wireless by bribery of one of Jeffray's clerks. These he vigorously circularized, soliciting the deposit of Commercial Wireless bonus stock given by the parent company or orders for the same, promising prices around twenty cents a share.

Clark met this new move by compelling Jeffray to ferret out the crooked clerk and discharge him, while he took new precautions in his own office. Wertheimer promptly hired the discharged clerk, and the battle went on. Clark fought back effectively. All stockholders first received a circular letter, beginning: "Don't let brokers build their fortune on your misfortune."

This helped some. But, when the flood of bonus stock grew larger, and his own market was threatened, Clark arranged matters in the Commercial office so that transfers of bonus stock "took their turn," in routine, according to the number of the certificate. The delays which followed this system prevented quick deliveries by the Wertheimer wolves and sometimes put them in a hole where they were compelled to refund cash payments made on account of stock which they had promised for immediate future delivery.

Then Art came out with newspaper broadsides announcing that the stock would be advanced to seventy-five cents

per share following the international yacht races, and earnestly advising the holding of all Commercial certificates for better prices. During that contest he promised to demonstrate decisively the superiority of Henry Blue's machines.

Through it all he had outwardly preserved his poise, met every emergency with the mailed fist and, when he found one illegal transfer order bearing Wertheimer's endorsement, started another merry dance with a warrant charging forgery. With this as a club, he still further delayed transfers of the cheaper stock, insisting on comparisons of all orders for bonus stock with the books of the parent company before filling them.

But inwardly the devouring flame of love aggrieved seared his heart. A good drunk might have helped, but Clark was too busy.

Jeffray, scenting the necessity for united action in times of common peril, came around handsomely. He even went to Ireland to talk with some of Du Bosque's influential directors, to see if they would agree to a coöperative basis for reporting the yacht race. This was refused, and he was now *en route* to America on the *Lucania*.



ALL of these things were fitting through Glenn Howe's mind as he stared out at the relentless surf, gnawing at the sands of New Jersey. He sighed heavily, and reentered the wireless station. Somehow, he felt better when near the unfailing optimism of his friend. The first flush of wealth was losing its rosy glow. He was an executive now, with duties born of his position of power, and the strain of making good to the stockholders told on him.

"I'd like to get some fresh dope, Professor Curtiss," Art was saying as the president came in; "something that makes an appeal; something with which to hammer out a series of swell ads., when little Tommy Lipton has been tucked up in his crib again. There's no time like just now. Suppose you spiel a little about these Hertzian waves."

The sedate man of science permitted himself one of his rare smiles.

"It's a big subject," he answered.

"Of course it is," bubbled the newspaperman. "And we want to horn in with the real goods about it."

"Well," resumed Curtiss, "let's use an

illustration of a battleship. Suppose one steamed up here, shelling Long Branch with big projectiles about forty thousand times as speedy as a rifle bullet, and kept up continuous firing. Suppose its smaller guns showered others with a speed of about a hundred and seventy-five thousand miles a second. That's about the way the thing would seem to human beings, if these Hertzian vibrations were enormously enlarged."

Clark whistled. "Some shooting, cull! But go on and tear their hearts out, will you?"

"Easily. Suppose each shell or bullet that struck burst into still more minute projectiles, each with the penetrative power of an X-ray beam, diving through stone and concrete, wood or chilled steel, body and bones—literally riddling everything with their horrifying vibrations—what kind of a scene of carnage do you think would result?"

"Don't shoot any more, Professor. War is much worse than Sherman ever dreamed it was. But that's great stuff. How many of those cunning little things do you calculate you'll jar loose when we tear off a message that says the *Shamrock* lost her baby-jib and that the *Columbia* is almost in sight of the prize sausage? That is, how big is that Hertzian-ray boat—really?"

"You could maneuver a fleet of them nicely on the head of a pin," smilingly replied the Professor. "We have named the three groups of rays after the first three letters of the Greek alphabet—Alpha, Beta and Gamma. Those we know. There are probably billions of others. The Alpha rays are charges of positive electricity, the Beta are the negative charges, while the Gamma rays—"

He stopped. The tape beside him had begun its mysterious clicking, and was unwinding with printed characters of some sort.

"I'll look after it, Professor," said Matt Marr, stepping to the machine. "I want to hear the rest of this lecture—what are those Gamma rays?"

"Well, they are generally agreed to be a modification of the Beta rays, when they have been checked in their wild flight. We call them X-rays, on account of their power to penetrate solids."

"Which do we use?" persisted Clark.

His pad was covered with notes and he

seemed so absorbed in the talk that he had forgotten to watch the still clicking tape.

"I should say the Beta group. I prefer to call them 'flying electrons.' They are not quite so long as actual light waves, so they are invisible when we send them out. What's the matter, Matt?"

The assistant electrician was pointing to the tape.

"Something odd here," said he gravely. "Looks to me as if our tuning-apparatus had gone on the bum. See that? That ain't our signal. It says 'N-T, N-T, N-T,' and then comes 'L.' And it is in Continental Morse, too."

Professor Curtiss bent over it with a troubled face.

"I'm afraid you're right," said he reluctantly. "Those are foreign signals."

CHAPTER IX

"THE HYPOTHETICAL HYPOTENUSE"

THE little group of enthusiasts felt a sudden chill. It affected each according to his individual temperament. Art Clark, although he realized full well the significance of the occurrence, set his obstinate jaw at a more scrappy angle. Glenn Howe paled a little, as he thought of what might happen during the race if their instruments could not be kept from recording other signals. At the same time, he was glad that it happened when it did. Perhaps it might be remedied before the crucial test.

Professor Joshua Curtiss forgot that he was a Bostonian. He was miles away from the proprieties of Beacon Street at that moment. His scientific reputation was hanging on the obstinately buzzing instrument which again repeated the cabalistic characters:

"N-T, N-T, N-T—L."

He quietly detached the slip and turned to Marr.

"Matt, here's a chance to solve a scientific problem. Want to tackle it?"

"Sure." But while the electrician's tone was a little dubious, Joshua Curtiss only grinned his slow, gorgeous grin. Joshua never grinned like that unless he was up against something more than ordinarily difficult and the grin was his manner of expressing his delight at a situation calling for the real measure of a man of science.

"If this is a wireless call, which we may

assume at the start, until that theory is disproven by such facts as we deduce," he continued, "what call would it likely be, Matt?"

"'N-T,'" mused the assistant, "'N-T'—why that might be 'Nantucket.'"



"NOT bad, Matt; not at all bad for a hazard," returned Curtiss, his grin growing an inch less. "Put that down on a slip of paper for a minute or two. Now, assuming that Nantucket is the name of the station which is being signaled, it is perfectly obvious that that call is coming from a boat, isn't it? The only other inference would be another land station—and I don't know of any, do you?"

"No. That 'N-T,' if it really means Nantucket is from some ship carrying the Du Bosque apparatus."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because Du Bosque claims to be able to tune out interference, and Nantucket is one of his stations."

"Plausible—but not conclusive," severely observed the Professor. "But to continue the deduction: What do you make of the 'L'?"

"If it's a steamship, there's only a few of them carrying wireless. Let's see—could it be the *Lucania* that's signaling 'L'? She has a Du Bosque outfit."

"Easily ascertained," remarked Curtiss, picking up the morning paper on the table and turning to the shipping news. He ran his lean forefinger down the column of "arrivals." "Until we establish the fallacy of this chain of reasoning, gentlemen, it would seem that we are right. The *Lucania* is due to dock tomorrow morning at quarantine in New York harbor."

"Sure," chimed in Clark. "Jeffray's on her, too."

"All right. Now we're getting warm. Let's go a little farther. Matt, what is the resistance of that coherer?"

"One million ohms, theoretically."

"Actually?"

"I can't be positive, Professor. She showed that under the Wheatstone bridge-test, but those Norway iron filings are so delicate that it may have gained or lost since we sealed the tube into a vacuum."

"Put it down at a million, then."

Curtiss's face wrinkled a little, and he turned to the map on the wall.

"Assuming that the *Lucania* maintains

average speed for her voyage of twenty knots an hour, she is somewhere about five hundred and seventy-six miles from New York, if that is her call. We will still assume it is, because we get no interference from Nantucket—always providing that is the station she is calling. In other words, we get the steamer's call and do not get the land station's reply. That land station connects with direct wire to a New York newspaper, as we know."



HE STEPPED quickly to the map, and on the dotted lines of the steamer's charted course precisely measured off five hundred and seventy-six miles.

"Right here, gentlemen," he went on, much as if delivering a lecture to a classroom of aspiring students, "is the theoretical position of the steamer at this moment, assuming that our hypothesis and resulting deductions are correct."

He marked the spot by a heavy dot, circled it and measured again to the point on the map where the little wireless station they were in was indicated.

"Roughly speaking, according to my measurements, we are, therefore, about three hundred and sixty-five miles, more or less, in a straight line from that incoming steamer. Now, we will test the truth of the theory. If we can hear from the *Lucania*, I'm sure we can reach her with our own signals. Call that mysterious 'L,' Matt, and sign your own initial."

The little group of vitally interested men listened in awed silence to the sparking of the great Rhumkorf coil. They were face to face with the same mystic atmosphere that had impregnated Glenn Howe and Arthur Clark, when each had first engaged in the wireless business.

It was a very solemn and trying moment. According to the fragmentary lecture they had received, all about them the intangible winged messengers were vibrating in incalculable numbers. Unseen, unheard, unfelt, unperceivable to any of the ordinary senses through which life's phenomena are appreciated—nevertheless they *existed*.

Before them, this wizard of the Great Unknown was juggling with the resources of the Infinite. Out there in space were hurtling the harnessed giants of the impalpable Beta rays, doing the bidding of Man, the invincible.

They saw the tape begin slowly to unroll. "Yes, this is the *Lucania*. Who are you?" deciphered the Professor. "Cut off, Matt. What Du Bosque's operators don't know won't keep them awake nights. We have lots to do. Now—" the light of triumph was in his eyes—"gentlemen, this apparent accident is resulting most fortunately. This is the *Lucania*. And, having established that, we have one fact to start with. It is now reasonably certain that we also have her approximate position—which, as I have said, is some three hundred and sixty-five miles from us. Matt, draw a straight line and mark it three hundred and sixty-five miles."

The assistant obeyed.

"Draw another, at right angles to that and mark it one million ohms, the resistance of our coherer. That's right. Now, gentlemen, we will figure the hypothetical hypotenuse of this triangle, whose altitude is miles, whose base is ohms. The hypotenuse of this triangle, gentlemen, will be the wave length in meters of the precise Hertizian wave with which Du Bosque is tuning his instruments."

"What good is that?" demanded Clark.

"It is our salvation," came the calm reply. "Once we know that, we've got this yacht race won—because we can then scientifically tune out all interference from that source. Until now, we've been working blindly."

CHAPTER X

"WORTHLESS WERTHEIMER"

"I SEEM to be living a regular moving-picture life," lamented Arthur Clark to Babe Brown, electrician. The two were on the deck of the *Luella J. Lucas*, just then cruising peacefully alongside a hayfield.

"Don't worry. We'll make it," advised the giant. "I've got that infernal aerial capacity-wiring up at last. It's just one hundred and fifty feet to the top of that mast—and we have no bridges except that railroad draw at Raritan. I think we're coming along mighty fine. Add it up—and see what we've done in the last ten days. Here the whole bunch comes tearing back from the New Jersey coast to Philadelphia, rewinding every coil we have so that the discharge is four times as strong on all sending-apparatus."

"Then we make up a lot of new coherers, with a resistance of four million ohms, instead of one million—but what for, I dunno. And even that ain't all. We have to fix up all sending keys with platinum points as fat as the end of a fountain pen; then we slip in two more sets of chloride accumulator battery, and install a dynamo and gas engine on the boat and in the station. Professor says we gotta be sure. He never played anything but a cinch in his life, the way he acts. But do you know what we're going to do on this boat?"

"Everything and everybody, I guess," answered the scribe.

"We're going to throw lightning all over that race course," went on the electrician solemnly. "Gee, Art! Why, if you get within four feet of that five-strand insulated wire, and I happen to be pressing the key, you'll get knocked down by the spark that'll jump right out at you—allee samee wildcat, charged with juice. Keep your distance when we begin to send."

"Oh, I'm hep. And you needn't hump up your spinal column so strong. You ain't the only one that's been busy. Here at the last moment I have to figure out a dash code for every possible movement of the yachts—and that means reading up every blasted race in the *Eagle's* files. I never saw a yacht race since I sailed chips in a tub. But I did it—made ten typewritten copies, and unless both yachts start for Davy Jones' locker together, I've got a signal that'll announce any feature of that race with not more than three numbers."

"I guess we've all been busy," continued Brown. "Got to hand it to you for figuring out another route to get the boat to the course in time. I take off my hat to the man who bisected New Jersey with the Raritan Canal, and once we're in the Raritan River, what's to stop the march to victory, hey?"



"I DON'T know," admitted Clark dreamily. "But every blessed night this week, I've had a nightmare about Wertheimer. That gink has sure got my goat. He don't savvy much, but for low-down deviltry he sure takes the diamond medal. Suppose he squats right down in this canal, somewhere? How're we going to get by him?"

The youth had cast Sylvia Hall's memory into outer darkness. He erected, in-

stead, an altar to the memory of her prototype, the girl with whom he had danced five years before. And always the altar fire was fed by the memory of the love that might have been.

The dinner bell stopped the discussion. Both men went below while the tug that was towing them puffed steadily onward through the canal. When they had emerged, Raritan was in sight, and the last stage of their journey to Sandy Hook was almost begun.

The tug towing the *Luella*, the prosaic two-masted ex-oyster-schooner, stopped below the big steel draw and whistled noisily for the bridge to open. The bridge-tender grinned down at them from his lofty perch, and rang his little signal bell to the operator in the tower.

Clark paced uneasily back and forth. The first yacht race was due to begin the next morning. It was growing late. He had still to lock into the Raritan River, procure a pilot and wind down the stream to Sandy Hook that night.

Again the tug captain whistled impatiently. Again the bridge-tender twisted his little crank, and grinned down at the feverish man pacing the deck. But the draw did not open, and the high mast, carrying a wireless sending and receiving apparatus of precisely the same length as at the land stations on the Jersey shore, would not clear the ironwork above by a dozen feet.

"Put me ashore, Captain Hawkins," commanded Clark.

He could not delay longer. Something was wrong up above. At that rate they would never reach the course in time to report what was happening. Clark was in a vicious mood when he leaped on the first steps of the tall ladder leading up to the bridge.

"Keep on signaling. I'll catch you below at the locks," he called as he began to climb.

"I'm not much of a gambling-man," he muttered as he reached the top, "but I'll bet last year's shoe laces that friend Wertheimer has been around these diggings somewhere."

"Why don't you open the bridge and let us through?" he demanded of the bridge-tender.

"Thot bridge is locked in Jersey City, sor," replied the man. "I've signaled the operator twice. I dunno what's wrong."

With an oath Clark ran across the trestle

to the tower. As he neared it, he stopped abruptly. The odor of a strange yet familiar perfume came to him. He thought he heard the swish of skirts on the other side of the building. But he could not stop. Sylvia used a delicate scent like that, but Clark remembered he had resolved on "ducats." The "duchess" could wait. He rushed up the tower steps, three at a time. The tug was again screaming frantically for the bridge to open.

"Why don't my boat get passage through the bridge?" he demanded.

"I've heard no signal, sir!" replied the operator, hanging his head.

"Well, you hear me now, don't you?" snarled Clark. "If that bridge isn't opened by the train despatcher for me in ten minutes, you tell him I'll land a force of marines, take possession of the approaches and pass my boat through—regardless of his train schedule."

The operator's face went chalky-white. He sprang to the key.

"——! That would lose me my job! Don't!" he pleaded.

"Get busy, then," snapped the newspaperman. "I'm proceeding from Philadelphia to Sandy Hook under sealed orders and an imperative schedule. Your railroad isn't any bigger than the United States Navy, is it?"

"No, sir," replied the operator humbly.

The key clattered to the Jersey City office. The relieved operator turned. Art was looking out of the window.

"You'll have the bridge immediately, sir. Sorry for the delay." But Clark was outside.



THERE was just one thought uppermost in his mind that first frantic second. At all hazards, he must get away from the vicinity of the tower. Constructively, he was guilty of a crime—practically impersonating an officer of the United States Navy. Every minute was precious, now. He still had to secure a pilot for the night voyage through the Raritan. The youth did not wait to find a path down the cliff to regain the boat. He rolled, writhed and slid to the bottom, splashing into the water, just as the *Luella* floated into the river alongside.

"Jersey" Hawkins, commander, fished him out with the boat hook. He went below for a change of clothes, reappearing

as the boat drew up to the pilot's wharf. "Where's my pilot?" roared Captain Hawkins.

The knot of curious idlers disintegrated. There was no reply. The prow of the *Luella* swung in toward the wharf as Hawkins hurried forward. The press agent was at his heels. It was not a long jump, and both made it.

Without pausing, they headed angrily toward the shed which served for an office at the far end. Two men were chatting inside. One of them was greedily eyeing a pile of paper money. The porcine face of the other man was smoothing in unctuous lines of satisfaction.

Sol Wertheimer loved every silken fiber of a bill, large or small, but he knew when to part company with them. Smugly self-satisfied, he was squatting in the tiny enclosure, tempting the waiting pilot to betray the men who had retained him; unconscious of the fact that the boat he had heard frantically whistling beyond the drawbridge half a mile above had now slipped through the barrier; unconscious of the keen eyes and ears of Arthur Clark, peering through the crack in the door.

"All you have to do, my friend," smoothly explained Wertheimer, "is to be too sick to take that boat down the river to-night. Pick out your own disease. It needn't be any worse than a bellyache. Did you ever have a chance to pick up a couple of hundred dollars for a bellyache before?"

The pilot hesitated. In his pocket was the twenty-dollar bill with which he had been hired for the important task of seeing the *Luella* safely through the tortuous channel of the Raritan. Naturally he was honest. But here was ten times that twenty waiting—and the most plausible of excuses.

A sinewy hand descended, gripped the tempter's collar and whisked him from the chair. The pile of bills lay untouched on the table. As Wertheimer lurched over against the side of the wall, before he could even see what had caused the startling interruption, a nervous fist crashed against his porcine jowl, and he whanged to the floor of the wharf.

"With the goods, eh?" sneered the press agent. His eyes blazed wickedly from the pallor of his angry face. "Why didn't you tell the gentleman to join the stonemasons' union until the first race was run tomorrow? As it is, I guess he'll forget you and get busy.

But I won't—and just to show you that I think you are one of the bright, particular jewels of my wireless crown, I'll invite you to make the voyage with us. Get up!"

His toe crashed into the prostrate broker's ribs. Wertheimer howled. A second kick electrified him. He scrambled to his feet. Arthur Clark fastened his fingers in the lapel of his coat, seized his wrist with the other hand, and using the famous "patrolman's lock" propelled him to the *Luella*, now secured fore-and-aft to the wharf. Behind them hurried the sheepish pilot and Captain Hawkins.

With another well-placed kick Clark assisted Wertheimer over the low rail of the schooner. The waiting crew were casting off the lines. The rivermen on the dock were pop-eyed with wonder at the unusual spectacle.

"Full speed ahead!" vociferated Captain Hawkins to the tug, as the other man climbed into the pilot house.

"I'll have you arrested!" raged Wertheimer.

"Not if I see you first," venomously retorted the press agent. "I charge you with assault with intent to kill. You saw him, didn't you, Captain Hawkins?"

"You had a very narrow escape," truthfully affirmed the commander. "I thought you would never live to see that first race."

"Let me off this boat," demanded the captive, struggling toward the rail.

But the swirl of the Raritan was eddying swiftly in their wake and they were well offshore.

"And let you bribe another operator to close a bridge to traffic?" viciously interpolated Clark. "Or buy a couple of bellyaches? Nix! You'll land at Atlantic Highlands in about four hours. By that time you'll have aches to sell. After that, my friend, if I ever see that plug-ugly mush of yours again where I think it has no business, you'll present credentials to the next world without any more ceremony!"



WERTHEIMER cut loose a wild yell and waved his handkerchief frantically toward an automobile speeding along the river road. The auto-horn hooted in response. Clark whipped out his binoculars and focused on the veiled figure of the woman in the tonneau.

His face was murderous as he lowered the glasses and turned on the plotter. Wert-

heimer whimpered and dived down the first hatchway. There was reason for the new madness which had settled on Arthur Clark's face. A man may stand up under some brands of deviltry and smile. But since time began, no true man ever smiled when he found the woman he loved with the man he hated.

Babe Brown bulked heavily between the press agent and the hatchway.

"Take it easy, Art," he gently admonished. "Remember what we've got to do tomorrow, and every other day after that, until the race is over. I saw her, myself. Yes, I know that it was Sylvia Hall. But what of it? You can clean this wallower up two weeks from today just as well as now, can't you?"

They floated into the lower bay, just inside Sandy Hook, with the harvest-noon shedding a lustrous radiance over the water. It was perfectly calm, except for the sluggish tides of the Raritan and Shrewsbury Rivers, contesting with the ocean for their unburdening.

Off to the right, riding at anchor, floated the saucy *Shamrock*. Near her lay the *Columbia*, also moored to a buoy.

On the hill the glitter of lights in the Atlantic Highlands club house showed where the foes of the morrow were fraternizing before the fray, and as Babe Brown sputtered their arrival in code to the wireless station at Jeddo-by-the-Sea, the congratulations which flashed back from them and later on from Judah showed that the instruments were in perfect tune.

Despite the moonlight, Clark was fascinated by the violet haze that shrouded the long wire reaching to the masthead of the *Luella* when Brown was sending.

The press agent knew that those rays blended into still higher and altogether invisible vibrations. The wonder and awe of it struck home to him. He looked up at the silent stars, wheeling in their never-ending, majestic procession. Tonight and tomorrow, he was a part of them—he and Babe Brown held the tendrils of power which heretofore only the gods had wielded.

Captain Hawkins himself sculled the sullen Wertheimer ashore. They vanished up the long wharf. Arthur Clark still gazed at the stars, wondering, as he stood on the borderland of the Infinite, how far the men to come after him on earth would walk into the mysterious country all about him—and

how far that borderland would move invitingly back, as each fresh and marvelous conquest of man merged into the commonplace.

The reverie faded. What mattered it if he had usurped the thunders of Jove or the winged feet of Mercury? They could not assuage the pain that clutched his heart, even in the hour of his prospective triumph.

"I picked the ducats," he whispered, "but the duchess sure has the Indian sign on me yet. I wonder why she fell for that porpoise?"

"What's that?"

Babe Brown's startled exclamation roused him. The electrician was pointing toward the shore.

Down the long wharf "Jersey" Hawkins, commander, was wildly running. He leaped into his boat, and sculled madly out toward his ship.

"Up anchor," he bellowed, when they could hear him. "There's a warrant out for all of us on a charge of shanghaiing Wertheimer."

CHAPTER XI

AT HANDGRIPS WITH THE INVISIBLE

"IT'S a made-to-order morning," effervesced Babe Brown.

The press agent turned and glanced up the bay. The superb sunlight danced on the water, the fresh breeze promised power a-plenty for the two nattily groomed yachts, now slipping their buoys and lithely gliding through the water behind the puffing tugs.

Behind him, as far as his eye could range above the narrow channel where Sandy Hook bars the huge Atlantic from the lower bay of New York harbor, the water was massed with boats.

There were big boats and little boats; fast boats and slow boats; svelt gasoline launches, cumbrous side-wheeler excursion steamers; pirouetting yachts of millionaires and even little leg-o'-mutton craft guided by expectant plebeians—all *en route* to the race course, some six miles farther out on the ocean.

"It is," he agreed. "If this wind holds, there's one race going to be won and lost before the shades of night send the jolly tars into their silk pajamas, and we will either have accumulated some small addi-

tions to the wireless-family bank roll, or I'll be trying to borrow your carbolic."

"Oh, I almost forgot." The electrician was heading for the companionway. "Professor Curtiss wants us to read over the instructions he gave me when I left. They are to be followed without deviation, so far as we can. I'll bring 'em up."

Clark picked up a megaphone, and strolled forward.

"Captain, ask the tug to pull us over as close as he comfortably can to the *Columbia*," he commanded.

When the intervening gap had narrowed, the newspaperman sent his clear tones vibrating to the racing craft.

"Ahoy, Captain Barr on board the *Columbia*!"

The skipper stepped to the rail and tipped his cap.

"This is the Commercial Wireless despatch boat, *Luella Lucas*, Captain Barr. We are going to send the news of the *Columbia's* gallant defense of the cup to the entire civilized world fifteen minutes ahead of all competitors!"

The jackies joined in the cheers which Barr led. Then Clark slipped over to the *Shamrock*.

"Ahoy, Captain Sycamore!"

The commander left the tiller and smiled over at the man with the megaphone.

"This is the Commercial Wireless despatch boat, *Luella Lucas*. We are going to send the news of the *Shamrock II's* gallant effort to lift the cup to the entire civilized world fifteen minutes ahead of all competitors!"



AS BEFORE, Captain and crew cheered the announcement. As Clark stepped toward his key to send the first messages, Brown came forward with the instructions.

They were brief, lucid—although mysterious:

Your watch has been carefully synchronized with that of all other men engaged in transmitting the news or operating the instruments. Send all bulletins in dashes, each one second long. Use one dash for the number one, two dashes for two, and so on. Space the intervals between parts of a number with one second, between different numbers with two seconds. After each signal, until we are working well, you will wait three to five seconds for us to repeat it to you. When we have found that all signals are intelligible, we will simply "O. K." After three O. K.'s you may proceed to send without

waiting for any response from the land station.

Between authentic signals, continue to send, in Continental Morse, the various excerpts which I have written out on slips and enclose. They consist of selections from Kipling, Robert Browning, and various other standard authors. On no account must you fail to do this.

Then followed sundry instructions about the preliminary bulletins and news flashes during the morning, preceding the actual race. Brown and Clark read and reread the instructions carefully. The electrician frowned, but the scribe only chuckled. The meaning of it was dawning on him, and he sat down to the key with a laugh, for his first messages:

"Shamrock II and Columbia are within two miles of starting-point, which extends from Scottish Lightship to judges' boat. Both yachts begin setting sail and tuning up. Tremendous fleet of water craft in all languages and assorted sizes are bearing down on the course, herded by torpedo boats and revenue cutters. All skippers not specially permitted inside the course must keep a mile from the official lines under penalty of losing charter for boat."

"O. K.," flashed the Jeddo station. "Now whoop it up."

"Both yachts now under full sail," went on the Luella. "Columbia beats Shamrock by two seconds setting baby-jib topsails. They jockey for position. The first gun is fired. In one minute both will get the starting-signal."

"O. K.," came the reply. "Give us the code for the start the minute the gun is fired and signal which yacht crosses the line first."

"They're off!" flashed Clark. He caught the puff of smoke from the starting-gun. "I-I-I-I," he continued. The *Columbia* was across the line. "2-2-2-2," he whipped the key with staccato dashes, timing them carefully with the proper length and intervals as the *Shamrock II*, her sheets fluttering like the gown of a dainty debutante, whisked right behind.

The reply came, and the newspaperman confirmed it.

"O. K.," came the shore signal again. "Now smoke up and keep puffing."



AND that was why, when Clark, still chuckling, began sending the first lines of "Pippa Passes," out into the infinite void through which the earth slams headlong, year after year, that a maddened man leaped to the back of a horse at the Du Bosque station at Atlantic Highlands, and galloped wildly toward Jeddo-by-the-Sea, five miles below. It was Seton, wireless expert in charge of the Amalgamated News. As he hurled his smoking horse to his haunches outside the Commercial Wireless cottage, Professor Joshua R. Curtiss, with saddened face, stepped out of the house to meet him.

"Good morning," said he formally.

"Howdy!" jerked Seton, swinging from the animal's back.

"May I ask your name?" inquired Professor Curtiss.

"I'm Seton, in charge of Du Bosque's land station at Atlantic Highlands. Say, Mr. Curtiss, we ain't getting a thing up there but a — of a jumble. And when it ain't hopelessly indecipherable, an invisible giant is skating down our tape, leaving nothing but an inky streak where we ought to be getting signals."

The professor iced his face.

"I fail to see how that fact should interest your competitors," he dryly observed.

Seton flashed the briefest of all-inclusive looks at the man of science, and threw the bridle rein he had been holding over the fence post. He started toward the gate. The professor anticipated him, paced swiftly down the sidewalk and bulked his lank form against it.

"You will excuse me, I am sure," said he, quietly, "but we can not allow any one in the station except the employees. And, if you wish to talk with me, perhaps we had better cross the road. There you can not hear the sounder on the Western Union wire, we have looped into New York."

This was just what Seton wanted to hear, but he could find no reason to advance which would justify remaining after such a pointed statement. As they were turning away from the fence, his trained ear had caught the chatter of the wire-transmitting apparatus, looping into New York from the wireless station. His suspicions were confirmed. They were getting the news, for he distinctly heard:

"*Barr brings Columbia across the Sham-*

rock's bows, forcing her to come about, then blanketing her in the light wind, and gains a half mile. They split tacks. Shamrock is dropping behind. Breeze seems to be dying. Both yachts still some distance from first stake boat on triangular course and, unless wind freshens, neither may be able to finish in time limit today."

"Now, about the invisible giant you mentioned," continued the professor, "I wonder where he could have come from?"

CHAPTER XII

UP HILL, ALL THE WAY

"GET out of there!"

The dissonant command rasped from the revenue cutter's deck sent a chill down the spine of Babe Brown. Clark, at the key, was merrily clicking off some choice fragments from "The Ship That Found Herself," by the greatest living writer, as the electrician responded:

"This is a news boat."

"Can't help it. You've got to get out of there, or we'll send a boatload of men, take you back to New York and rescind your Captain's license as well as that of your tug."

This curt ultimatum could not be disregarded, even by the two hardy spirits on board the *Luella*, now bobbing up and down sickeningly in the choppy sea, and occasionally adding a side twist from the wake of some big excursion steamer.

They were ignominiously huddled over to the inner side of the line of assorted sea-going vessels, where the chop was just as bad, and where a heavily loaded old tub intervened between the little schooner and the view of the competing yachts.

"This won't do at all," groaned Clark. "Here, Babe, you take the key for a minute till I get this straightened out."

The predicament was a serious one. They were hopelessly interlocked behind larger vessels, the wind seemed to be picking up again and the yachts were speeding far ahead in such fashion, as they tacked to and fro, that estimation of their relative distance apart was totally impossible, to say nothing of whether or not the *Shamrock* was regaining her lost distance.

Clark studied for a moment. There was a

deathly faintness gripping at the pit of his stomach.



"HEY, Captain Hawkins!"

He piped the words in a faint treble, then dashed to the rail to offer the landsman's inevitable tribute to Father Neptune. As he looked up, his head reeling, the deadly nausea almost stilling his heartbeats, a grinning gargoyle's leer flashed from the steamer rail a few feet away.

It was Sol Wertheimer.

The anger which surged up steadied Clark as no medication could have done. He must keep up the bulletins—no matter at what cost. Seasickness, the hidden boats, and any other difficulty which might still occur, must be met and mastered. He groped back toward the key, still clutching at the ship's rail for support. The swaying, sickening motion continued, but Clark fought back the tide of illness resolutely, and beneath his gripping fingers the hard wood to which he was clinging softened to the crisp, feathery crinkle of that one-hundred-dollar bill—the bill which had slid down the lightning bolt that killed Henry Blue's yoke of steers down in the Blue Ridge mountains.

"We'll make it rain a million out of a clear sky if I can just hold on," was his defiant thought as he choked again, and rendered the remaining contents of his stomach to the turkey-trotting waves.

"Babe," he begged, "call Captain Hawkins over here, will you?"

He turned to glimpse at the gap which had unexpectedly opened between him and the yachts as the excursion steamer drew by them.

"And send this bulletin," he continued, with a touch of his old-time mercurial temperament:

"Breeze freshens. Shamrock on star-board tack reduces Columbia's lead an eighth of a mile. Cup defender on port tack, now leading by an eighth of a mile only. Both yachts now reaching for the stake boat."

As the jarring buzz of the coil broke forth, Clark laid his hand on one of the rope-covered wire stays leading to the tall mast carrying the aerial capacity wire. He was amazed to find he could read the mes-

sage from the key Babe Brown was manipulating. It was a wonderful moment. They were literally "slinging lightning" across the harbor. Every wire stay on the *Luella* thrilled with induction caused by the excess current.

Countless infinitudes of radiations were battling with their weaker fellows from the Du Bosque apparatus. Clark, as he waited, could see the bewildered rival operators plainly. His own obscure craft, a pigmy-like chip on the surface of the vast sea, in his imagination became a cocky little challenger of the haughty, luxurious yacht which the Amalgamated News had chartered.

They, he reflected a little bitterly, had every advantage. They were on board a floating palace—the great flag bearing the letters "A. N." trailing over the stern. It was a fast boat, too; the speediest in the fleet, apparently. And, as Clark whipped his binoculars to his eyes, he could catch the sheen of the mahogany-topped tables at which the Du Bosque operators were seated; could even see the gold braid on the naval officers who were watching them at work; could distinguish the high hats of the great financiers of Wall Street who, the papers had stated, were to finance the Du Bosque Company against Glenn Howe's Commercial Wireless.

"There's Goliath—and I'm playing David this morning," he muttered as he reeled back to greet Hawkins.



"CAPTAIN, how are we going to keep those yachts in view?" he queried.

The weatherbeaten sea dog shot a glance aloft. He turned his bearded face to the impatient reporter.

"That's easy! All you have to do is to send a man aloft in a breeches sling, give him a glass and a megaphone," he continued, "and let him keep you posted. He can look right over these here steamers."

"Who will we send?"

"What's there in it?"

"Fifty dollars a day, besides the regular pay of the man who goes up."

"I'll go."

Hawkins hurried aft, shouting orders to the two men swabbing down the decks, and giving instructions to the mate.

In ten minutes the three of them and the cook were hauling him up with the block and tackle they had rigged. Around his

neck hung Clark's binoculars, and a megaphone was lashed to his wrist.

"How long does this job last?" he demanded as he rose.

"Fifty dollars every day the yacht race continues," retorted Clark. "I'll pay you every night."

"That's a bargain. I'll stay up if I tip the craft over," grinned the swaying figure.

In two minutes he hung securely fifty feet above the deck.

"Both yachts come about," he roared. "Both now on starboard tack. *Shamrock* an eighth of a mile ahead and rounding the stake boat."

Clark sprang to the key and began to dash off the corresponding code numbers. Babe hurried below for another key. The platinum points of the one they had been using all the morning were almost melted off. As Art dipped his hand in the can of oil to keep the electricity from shocking him unnecessarily, he heard a wild yell from aloft.

The *Luella* was rolling in the trough of the sea. As she lurched, and as the scribe pressed the sending-key which charged the aerial and ground wires, Captain Hawkins was swung over toward the five-strand insulated wire running to the mast top.

With every depression for the dash-numerals, jets and sparks from the overcharged wire shot out and jabbed the Jerseyman in the legs and back. Connected as he was with ropes to the other mast, he formed a perfect "interrupter" for the excess current, and every signal was a cruel punishment.

"Pull me down!" he roared. "I wouldn't stay up here for five hundred dollars a minute."

The mate was hurrying to the rope end. Clark beckoned Babe back to the key and ran aft.

"Hold on!" he commanded. "It won't last but a minute or two."

"Let me down, I say!" bellowed the panic-stricken man. For Babe Brown, religiously following orders, was thrusting electric knives into him with every soft stanza from "Fra Lippo Lippi," which he was interlarding, while waiting for the next announcement.

"Your pay is raised to a hundred dollars a day!" shouted Clark, grasping the first mate by the throat, and attempting a one-handed ju-jutsu with the African from the cook's galley.



IT MAY have been the psychology of the announcement or it may have been the shift which the whole fleet took to cross the base of the triangle around which, two miles farther on, the racing yachts were now swiftly gliding. At any rate, as the *Luella* resumed an even keel at just that instant, Captain Hawkins thought a moment, and then shouted back:

"All right. I'll stick. *Columbia* on port tack, crawls up on *Shamrock*. Now they're neck and neck."

Clark wiped his streaming forehead and started back for the key. The tape was unrolling with the emergency shore signal—"X-X."

He ceased to send as he acknowledged the signal and awaited the impending message:

"Don't attempt a landing tonight. Wertheimer's dirty work is bearing fruit. Constables on your trail at all wharves to arrest you. They have warrants charging kidnapping, assault with intent to kill, swearing by wireless telegraph—anything and everything to keep you from getting to sea again tomorrow. Keep three miles from shore at all hazards until race is over. Smashed Du Bosque in first twenty minutes. We are to get twenty thousand dollars cash from Amalgamated News for our report, and ten thousand is already paid. They have looped on to our wire in New York. Bulletins coming correctly. Keep up good work. Any suggestions?" CURTISS.

Clark bit his lips. "Wertheimer—always Wertheimer," he savagely sneered. "Well, here's where I kick you harder than we kicked Du Bosque this morning."

His own key rattled quickly for a moment and a satirical smile lighted his face.

"I guess he won't be so busy tomorrow as he has been—if my hunch comes through," he growled as he lifted his ear to catch the next shout from "Jersey" Hawkins—once more experiencing martyrdom from the Beta rays, where he hung helpless between the deck and the placid, blue sky.

CHAPTER XIII

AGAINST ALL ODDS

SKULKING isn't pleasant—even when the skulker knows that he's playing the game on the level and against hideously unfair odds. But when one must hide

out on board a cramped little schooner, even on the days when there is no race, because the processes of justice are prostituted, melancholy may not mark him for her own for keeps, but for a time her brand is very much in evidence.

Arthur Clark moodily paced the deck of his little craft the rest of that day. As he had bulletined earlier, neither yacht could finish within the time limit. The wind died to a dead calm, and both racing-craft were towed by the tugs to their moorings just inside Sandy Hook, while the fleet of sightseeing people wended dispiritedly back to the tides of the commonplace in the metropolis.

Many of them had never seen a yacht race, and many would never have another chance. But at least they had the advantage of returning unhampered to their wonted occupations. With Clark, it was different. He must not only lie more than three miles offshore that night, but he must stay there alone the day following.

"We'll pick you up somewhere around here day after tomorrow," announced the tug captain as he was leaving. "They have to massage up them skimmin'-platters tomorrow; that's why there won't be any race except every other day. But I guess you ain't got no kick comin', for you've sure won out so far."

Even the cheering messages from the shore were not entirely reassuring. The Amalgamated News, it seemed, was very much chagrined over the failure of the Du Bosque apparatus to make good. Late that night, in their own commercial cipher code, Clark and Babe Brown took turns transcribing another lengthy message from Curtiss and Glenn Howe:

"Manager Wiltsie of Amalgamated News wishes us to agree to a compromise regarding further reporting of races. He asks us to take coil out of boat, but to sail over the course as formerly, pretending to report race. Says they will loop the wire from Du Bosque station on our New York loop, and send us all news concurrently with its arrival."

"Don't like the proposition," broke in Clark.

"They seem to be very ugly about it," continued Howe. "Would like to avoid irritating them if it can be avoided. Wiltsie hints at

future attacks on us through all papers their news agency serves, unless we agree."

"If you agree to anything except to keep on sending the news as you have contracted to do for them, I'll leave the boat," flashed back the newspaperman. *"Can't you see it's a trap? How can they do anything when we beat them to a frazzle this morning—and made them buy the news from us and pay for it? If we were not sending authentic news when they were hopelessly lost, what did they give us money for?"*

"They say they have tuned out interference and can now proceed without further aid," the tape read.

"I think they're bluffing. If they can, why do they want you to take the coil out of your boat? Did you get the draft for ten thousand cashed?"

"Yes."

"Tell them, then," nimbly jerked the fingers of the man with the bromo-seltzer brain, *"that you will abide by the contract and expect them to do the same. Refuse any modification of any kind or abridgment that they suggest. Watch the station, day and night. Get the Judah outfit ready for any emergency and watch that, too, like a hawk. My own opinion is that insiders in Amalgamated News are heavily interested in Du Bosque stocks and want to unload with the prestige of the yacht race to enable them to cash in. Tell them they can have their ten thousand dollars back—except you will prorate the day's work in proportion to the balance of the race, but make this concession only as a last resort. They're licked, they know they're licked—otherwise they wouldn't be around trying to bluff you with hints of blackmail in their papers. Maybe the Government has a contract pending with Du Bosque. Stand pat, and we'll win."*

When this had finally been agreed to, Clark could not sleep. He paced the gently undulating deck, now and then swallowing a cup of coffee. He had eaten very little all day, and the increasing problems from unexpected quarters kept him from sensing hunger.

He debated the odds and wondered at the mass of conspiracy which had been directed

against a perfectly legitimate industry. The clear, comforting stars came out in the sky, the gorgeous moon climbed slowly toward her zenith and started to descend, before the newspaperman had completed his long analysis of the situation.

"Well, where there's so much smoke, there's surely a little fire," he concluded at last. "And where every one wants to keep this yacht race from being reported by us there's surely some reason for their sudden interest. Wertheimer knows that if we put it over, he's a dead one, because we have entirely disproved his baseless allegations of our being merely a get-rich-quick concern. With his occupation gone, Mr. Wertheimer may star as a twentieth-century Othello for all of me. But this Amalgamated News, a concern supposed to be so virtuous that Caesar's wife couldn't wash the steps of its offices—what's sticking in its craw, I wonder?"



WITH that query and a very natural wonder still unanswered, as to how Du Bosque or the Amalgamated would make good their boast that they had "tuned out all interference" and would report the race the next start the yachts made, Clark, suddenly fatigued, sought his berth.

Reassuring messages from both land stations late next morning put him in a happier frame of mind. Nothing had occurred, and armed guards were patrolling both Jeddo-by-the-Sea and the Judah cottages, he was told. After a few minor inquiries, he dined and spent the rest of that afternoon playing chess with Babe Brown, beating him handily, even with the odds of a pawn in the electrician's favor.

Toward night he again got restless. Something, he felt, was wrong. Just what it was he could not be sure. But he could not shake off the impression. Again he restlessly paced the deck in the starlight, trying to cull from the intangible the clue to his worry.

Almost mechanically he threw in his sending-apparatus, and called Jeddo.

"What's doing?" he idly queried.

"Just caught a man with a keg of powder hiding in the bushes, near here. He had fuse, and as this was the only building near by, we held him for the police. He broke down and

confessed. Wertheimer hired him to blow up the station tonight."

"Good," shot back Clark. "Thanks for the tip. Something's been hurting me all evening. Now I know what it is. One of you boys grab the first night train to New York, and hire two ocean-going tugs to pick us up tomorrow morning."

"What's the matter with the tug you have chartered?"

"Just a plain hunch, old man. If Wertheimer is unscrupulous enough to try to blow up a station, he's got backing. We don't know who is behind him, nor why—but I'll bet you all the company takes in the next six months against a stale sinker that either Wertheimer or some one else has already bribed our tug captain to forget to find us when the race opens tomorrow. Get busy, and tell me tomorrow whether I'm the original seventh son of a flying electron. Meanwhile I'll file my teeth for that hornet, if he swims out in my direction. Hear anything from Philadelphia yet, in reply to my message of yesterday?"

"Expect answer in morning. Glenn is starting for New York to engage spare tugs. Good night, unless something happens."



THERE was little sleep that night for Arthur Clark. He requisitioned Captain Hawkins's family shotgun from below, and paced the deck until the faint primrose of the perfect dawn spread its shimmering folds across the opalescent sky.

Then he drowsed a moment. The soft splash of oars stiffened him back to a nervous expectancy. A boat, with muffled oars, was drawing alongside. He heard the whisper of voices, then a head lifted cautiously over the rail. The man paused. From below came the heavy snores of Captain Hawkins, dreaming of gold yet to come. The figure stole toward the companionway.

Between the intruder and Clark hung the long boom of the mainmast of the schooner, sail furled. Another shadow was clawing its way up the side. Coldly, methodically and with movements that were impelled by the perfect certitude of his intention, Clark crept noiselessly behind the man peering down the little companionway.

Like a wraith he raised the double-barreled shotgun and whirled it heavily down on the head of the peering one. The cap he wore dulled the sound of the blow and he fell inertly to the foot of the steps. Clark crouched again behind the edge of the cabin and the protection of the furled sail.

The second man paused, cursed softly and then stole panther-like across the deck to the same spot. He evidently believed that his companion had stumbled and slid down the steps.

The boat had apparently drifted a little from the side of the vessel. Evidently it had no intention of doing anything except to stand by and wait for the others to return. At least that was the only explanation that occurred to the press agent, as his fizzing brain formulated theory and conclusion with the speed rivaling that of the flying messengers which he had been handling.

As this latest guess found confirmation in the soft dip of the almost noiseless oars, he changed his plans abruptly. He raised ever so little, and peered into the face of the second man. The faint light of the dawn revealed the crisp, curling hair, the sharp nose and the pendulous nether lip of Sol Wertheimer.

"Welcome to our city," he shouted, projecting the gaping muzzle of the shotgun into the rotund abdomen. "How's the dynamite game progressing? Ain't you frightened at the thought of being kidnapped again—or that some one will steal your good name?"

CHAPTER XIV

THE DICE OF DESTINY

THEIR Serene Highnesses and Majesties, the Fates, spinning the warp and woof of human destinies, seemed to Arthur Clark, prince of press agents, to have suddenly discovered a new way to throw the shuttle that morning.

He enjoyed his breakfast exceedingly. Sambo, the colored cook, carried in plates of steaming buckwheats, grilled sausage and fried eggs until his arms ached.

"Lawdy, Massah Art," he interrogated, "where you dun tuck away all dis stuff?"

"Scipio Africanus, I'm trying to generate a few ergs of energy to dissipate the sorrows of a misguided macer, over in the Judah

jail," answered the scribe. "Ain't it about time I began to eat? Today's the last day of the race, unless the *Shamrock* prolongs the agony by winning one. The disheartened, dumb look in that poor ape Wertheimer's eyes is haunting me."

The *Luella* was resting easily in the nook between the Shrewsbury and Raritan Rivers, almost in the same place she had dropped anchor days before. Clark no longer feared fake warrants which frivolous constables had concealed about their important persons. With Wertheimer caught red-handed trying to dynamite the *Luella*, with the confession of an accomplice that he had been hired to do the same thing at Jeddo, and, worst of all, with a bench-warrant waiting in the jail office on the two indictments from Philadelphia charging him with blackmail, the late manager of the *Money Trail* was in a fairly secure position.

The second race of the series had begun well. It was straightaway, fifteen miles to sea and return. The boom of the starting-gun had hardly died when the *Shamrock* flitted from the starting line, a cable's length ahead of the *Columbia*. Simultaneously a green balloon shot up from the Amalgamated press boat.

Clark, watching for the instant that the *Columbia* crossed, and hampered by an "off angle" from behind the excursion boats, failed to note the odd occurrence. But a moment later, as the red balloon which followed the *Columbia's* getaway sauntered over in his direction, he laughed.

"So that's the way Du Bosque is tuning out interference," he mused, striking the emergency "Double-X" for a quick shore connection.

"Got 'em lashed to the rails already," he signaled the shore station. "*Wiltzie has a corps of men with glasses on the Long Island and Jersey highlands, piking off the yachts when they are close inshore, and he's signaling from his own boat with colored balloons to men on other craft who are wigwagging the positions of the racers. That's the way Du Bosque has concluded to fight us. Spiel out a flash on it—charge Du Bosque with being out of commission—discredit him—and when they get back tomorrow licked to death, hand them the rest of the coin, or all of it, and we'll make them pay fifty thousand more before we hook up again.*"



ALL day his derisive smile followed the efforts of the news service to trace the movements of the yachts. His own terse bulletins, rapidly continued, and losing no point of the Titanic struggle between the wonderful craft competing for international honors, seethed invisible and inaudible out into space, to be intercepted and properly recorded at just two places—Jeddo and Judah.

When the yachts had rounded the fifteen-mile turning-point and were headed homeward, Clark raced his own boat at top speed to a point where the keen-eyed captain aloft could surely note the precise moment of the finish. It was a grand sight as the yachts came down the last half mile, racing neck and neck like thoroughbred horses, for the coveted goal. They struck the line—not fifty feet apart.

Instantly Clark, whose key had never stopped its monotone all afternoon between signals, flashed the winner. Then the second yacht followed. At both precise instances, the synchronous timepiece of Professor Curtiss added to the signal of the winner the time. The completed bulletin, sent over the wire from Jeddo, read—

"Columbia crossed the line at 3:15:42, Shamrock 3:16:10."

From a million throats in New York a hoarse shout heralded the victory. All over the land of the free and the home of the brave, millions of other straining eyes saw flashed from bulletin boards and ticker tapes, *"Commercial Wireless says Columbia wins first completed race by twenty-eight seconds."*

Almost immediately, the haughty Amalgamated News officially announced, not only throughout all America and Canada, but even to London by cable—

"The Shamrock has won."

Hard on the heels of the quick flash from the shore telling Clark of this astonishing blunder by his great rival, his own key sputtered venomously:

"Tell the world the Columbia won. Add that Du Bosque failing to report the races with his defective apparatus, has tried to use balloons. They sent up the red balloon, signify-

ing the Columbia had won, the instant it crossed the line. When the Shamrock followed, they released the green balloon. But the green balloon rose faster than the red balloon, and their men on shore made the very natural error of reporting the winner wrong."



THAT error opened up the game to Glenn Howe and his fighting friend as nothing ever could otherwise have done. They discussed it over a bottle of champagne in the little wireless station.

"You've gotta do it," succinctly observed Clark. "Any one can win if they have all the court cards in the deck and all the trumps. But when you can hitch the guy that's plugging against you in a harness to draw your own little red wagon, there's nothing left to do but gloat over the fallen and say wise things about the horrors of our barbarous civilization."

It was a very chastened Mr. Seton who called at the Jeddo station a few hours later. In fact, his repentance seemed so sincere that it led to a reluctant consent by Glenn Howe to a further supply of news upon the payment of the balance of ten thousand dollars cash before the next race. And, thereafter, during the entire race, all Amalgamated News despatches carried the significant caption: "Via Commercial Wireless."

Today, if the *Columbia* again won, would mark the final contest between the vessels. America had won both the others with narrow margins. The course was again triangular, and it seemed as if the tide of hard luck had at last turned in favor of that gallant sportsman, Sir Thomas Lipton, when both came careening home.

The wind was blowing landward, a little south of east. Both boats, being on the home stretch, had to fight their way in on the last leg of the ten-mile equilateral triangle, and then come about for the final dash over the line.

It had apparently been a *Shamrock* day. The breeze was much fresher than on any other, and the jaunty Irish craft seemed to walk away from her American rival. She led down the first leg, was around the first stake boat five minutes ahead, easily maintained the lead across the base, running almost before the wind, and seemed to gather new vitality as she crawled up the slower angle toward the apparent victory.

The *Columbia*, apparently hopelessly out-

classed, was far to the rear, although well inside the course, and in a position to take a quicker advantage of the wind in her last dash for the finish line. But only the most experienced sailors gave the American boat a "look-in."

It was just then that Clark, making his customary head-on spurt for the *finale*, hurried across the apex of the triangle, and laid down well behind the judge's boat, where he could pick the winner.

The great unwieldy mass of excursion craft, herded by the torpedo boats and revenue cutters, had already taken up their positions. It had been such an auspicious day for the final race that Glenn Howe had consented to come on board for the finish.

Heretofore he had stayed at Jeddo station. He hugely enjoyed every move of the great event, and now, with his own eyes, wanted to see this corporate child of his brain cap its splendid record with a crashing climax that would make him a millionaire.

The two men stood thoughtfully in the prow of the *Luella*, both thinking hard. They were almost within the enchanted gates of gold, where so few ever enter—where the many look with longing but futile eyes at the opulence which forever lures and eternally denies.

"It seems almost a dream, don't it, Art? This little oyster boat, this telegraph key, this long, sputtering strand of wire—can you make it feel real that when we have finished this achievement these poor, tawdry bundles of wire and wood will have become worth their weight in gold?"

"It does seem incredible," replied the press agent, glancing to where Babe Brown was thrusting quadrillions of electrons into space, and his eyes sought those of his friend again.

"Curtiss was telling us last night that the sixteen-foot dash you wrote on Du Bosque's tape at Atlantic Highlands, the day of the first completed race, signified an electro-etheric vibration more than sixty-four billions of miles long," resumed the president.

"I guess I'll have to kiss it good-by for quite a while," ruefully remarked the other man. "Well, here they come—look at that boy Barr. He'll almost win this race, in spite of all that's happened. See what he loafed back there for. He's caught the wind and has a straightaway in, while Sycamore must come about to make it."

Both men focused their eyes on the ap-

proaching finish, marveling at the superior seamanship of the American, now booming triumphantly down the final three hundred yards, just as the foreign craft came about and shook her sheets to catch the breeze.

"Wow!" howled Clark. "Say, Glenn, this is *living*!"



"GET out of there!"

The bellowing order came from the deck of the revenue cutter *Horner*, just behind them.

Clark whirled.

"Who you talking to?"

"To you!" pompously roared the man in the gold braid on the bridge. "Get out of there!"

"Go to the devil!" snarled Clark.

"What do you mean?" The commander was purple.

"Just what I say. I've been bullied and abused and dynamited and harassed all through this race; and I'm a newspaperman, shut out by your red tape from making a living. I won't move."

"I'll revoke your license and impound your craft until you pay your fine!" shrieked the officer.

"Sink her if you want to! In five minutes more I don't care if the entire navy opens fire."

The tug captain, however, was not made of the same stern stuff. Glenn Howe saw, with a sinking heart, that the order was heeded. But as Clark ran back to the key again to relieve Babe Brown the youthful magnate, blazing with the fire of his friend's defiance, ran down and severed the cable at the prow of the boat with one blow of a hatchet. The tug trailed away, the cable falling into the water behind her.

As he turned, the *Columbia* thrust her nose triumphantly across the finish line, and, lying where they were, a little to the left and right under port bow of the oncoming *Shamrock*, the president of Commercial Wireless knew that it would have been a tight squeeze to have jammed his hat into the space between the stern of the winner and the prow of the loser. The shrieking whistles vied with the tumultuous cheering. The gallant *Columbia*, a discard from the same race two years before, had not only beaten her sister American cup defender, but, thanks to the superior seamanship of Captain Barr, had made it three straight for the Stars and Stripes.

Somewhere a band on an excursion steamer was playing "The Star Spangled Banner." Clark whipped off his hat with his free hand, while he pressed down the key with his right. Even in the hour of his supreme triumph—a triumph whose successful achievement meant more to his ebullient soul than all the money in the world—the canny reporter did not forget Du Bosque, his rival.

He released the key and clutched his pal. "Look at Tommy Lipton," he yelled. "There's a sport for you! He's leading the cheers for the winner."

It was true—the most gallant loser that ever crossed the sea to wrest the coveted yachting-trophy from a foreign land, forgetting his own stinging disappointment at not winning even one race of the series, was adding new laurels to his brow and securing forever a warm niche in the hearts of his American cousins.



SOMETHING big, black and ominous loomed over the little schooner, now reeling helplessly in the backwash of a hundred steam-propelled vessels.

"Look out! The *Gloria*!" vociferated Glenn Howe, clutching Clark's arm.

Both ran to the other side of the boat. The monster yacht of the millionaire at whose name kings bend the pregnant knee that dividends may follow fawning, with an appalling crash slithered into the prow of the helpless *Luella*.

"You're a very clever fellow!" bellowed the commander of the *Horner*. "Now you've got what was coming to you."

"Aw!" Glenn Howe was infected with the rebellion which his prime minister had voiced. He regarded the casualty calmly. "How much Du Bosque Wireless are you stuck for?" he queried sarcastically, as the *Gloria*, with reversed engines, tore loose and the deck began to shiver.

But Arthur Clark had forgotten wireless, his long battle or their common peril. It mattered little to him that the Atlantic was a thousand fathoms deep below the quivering schooner. He heeded not the hoarse orders of Captain "Jersey" Hawkins. He was gazing into the tender, luminous eyes of a startled, sympathetic face peering down at him from the deck of the boat which had imperiled them by the collision. Those eyes held depths unutterable, and as the *Luella* settled gently by the nose, Clark

felt himself sinking into the sublime tenderness of Sylvia Hall's hypnotic gaze.

CHAPTER XV

THE DUCHESS AND THE DUCATS

GLENN HOWE'S face wore a triumphant smile as he turned to his partner. The Quaker City street car they had boarded at 39th and Lancaster Avenue started with a jerk.

"Well, Art, here's where I ask the Legislature to change my name to Glenn Howe Gotit. Jeffray and his syndicate couldn't endure having a gosling grow faster than their mother goose. They closed this morning."

"I saw that acquisitive Dutchman scratching an itchy palm," soberly admitted the prime minister of the flying electrons. "I hope you harpooned him for a nice wad," he listlessly added.

"A million for my majority stock interest," complacently returned the president of the Commercial Wireless. "Two hundred thousand down, all my stock in escrow with his notes, and a like sum every ninety days until the balance is paid. Default of one payment forfeits the agreement and all previous cash with which he has parted."

"And now?" gloomed the press agent.

"Now—why where are your hallelujahs? You look positively blue, Art! What ails you? To continue, however, now I want a real piece of statuary—two steers, a clod-hopping mountaineer and a thunderbolt, all in solid gold."

"I hope you enjoy it," solemnly rejoined the prince of press agents. "Would you mind investing my cut in carbohic acid?"

Glenn studied him before answering. There was no denying the genuineness of the dejection written on his friend's face.

"Fifty thousand of this and one fourth of the balance will go to your credit, Art," said he, cheerily. "Can't you crack a smile? You look as if you were headed for the electric chair instead of the bank!"

"I'm just beginning to believe there are some things money won't be able to buy, Glenn," responded the other man. "Of course the *Luella* is really the reincarnation of the golden argosy. But, outside of the fact that we landed Wertheimer so hard that he broke the world's record to plead guilty, I can't hear the nightingales singing in this million-dollar nightmare at all."

The car was filling up with the morning rush toward the business section. The passengers jammed like sardines in the aisles and then wedged between the seats. But Arthur Clark was oblivious to all but the dominant thought of his own mind.

"You mean——" began the president.

"I mean, Glenn, that I'd throw my wad right into the Schuylkill out there if I had to do it to get back that girl as she was before Wertheimer snagged her. I can't get over it. She was a queen, Glenn—or I'm a frost-bitten butternut. I never would have believed it. I don't want to now. But I have to, Glenn. I haven't room for an honest doubt in my head after all that's happened. I heard her in the booth at the Bohemian restaurant, I'm sure she was watching the tower at Raritan, I saw her as plainly as I see you now, when I'd scragged Wertheimer and took him down the river that night. But why, Glenn—why?"



"DO YOU really want the reason?"

The query fell in the softest of feminine cadences. The girl was at their elbow. Sylvia Hall thrust her mischievous face roguishly toward theirs—the old, *insouciant* expression glinting in her brown eyes.

"Any one who would pay such a price for the truth is entitled to it," she continued with an arch smile at the former press agent—a smile which made him clutch madly for the strap to steady the dizziness that engulfed him.

"Wertheimer was the sublimity of presumption." Her voice lowered cautiously. "He had no concept whatever of right or wrong. It must have been a congenital trait. That, at least, is the only theory I have to account for his approaching me with an offer of money for my notes of his conversation. I sold them—that is, he thought I did—for fifty dollars. When he took me to dinner, and praised me in his ignorant fashion, I knew he was planning something else. So, I fell in with his mood. He wanted the names of our stockholders. I pretended to copy them, and received another hundred dollars. I had to include a few of the genuine ones, to keep in his confidence and follow out all of his plans until after the yacht races. I kept a diary of all he said or did, the times we met and where, intending to confront him with it when his case came to trial."

Arthur Clark seemed suddenly to hear the twitter of the missing nightingales, and they were also close enough to make the melody most enjoyable.

"That plan failed," went on Sylvia Hall, "when Mr. Clark heard me talking with him in the restaurant. There was no explanation possible after the way he looked at me, and I pretended to leave town. Wertheimer offered me employment, and I accepted. He had been cautious before; now he forgot his shrewdness, for he believed me hopelessly discredited with you. But, I put it all down in my little diary. Here it is—everything he did, when and where."

The press agent's eyes were mutely adoring her.

"And you were very cruel," she sibilated, "very quick to judge and condemn me."

Arthur Clark put out a protesting hand.

"I must be dreaming," he whispered. "The duchess and the ducats both! Don't ever wake me up—please."

"But I just had to tell you all about it," she continued wistfully, "when I heard what you said about throwing the money into the Schuylkill."

"Toss it in the Delaware, instead, if you want to—we're almost there," laughed Clark. "Say, Sylvia, inasmuch as you're in the mood, do you mind continuing this inside information *séance* a little further? Did we ever meet before—or did we not?"

"We did."

"At Newport—at a ball?"

"Yes."

"But your name wasn't——"

"Sylvia Hall—no, but it was and still is Sylvia Hallburton. I was introduced to you as 'Miss Hallburton' at that time. I have been working as a stenographer getting a little practical business experience to help me manage my legacy."

Clark thrust his hand beneath her arm and aided her into one of the empty seats.



HE INTENDED to say something, something that he had long wanted to say, something which he had been frequently prevented from saying in the past. Despite the tacit invitation in the downcast face of Sylvia Hallburton, despite the cosmic urge that welled within him and bade him defy polite conventions which aver that it is bad form to propose marriage to an heiress in a street car—cruel Fate

rudely postponed the chance once more.

"Naw, you narrow-minded, hump-backed Hottentot," rasped Glenn Howe's voice angrily. "I wouldn't give you a dime. You made me walk forty-two squares a year ago today over this same route because I didn't have a nickel. Now, blast your

peaked head, I've squared it." He waved the certified check for two hundred thousand dollars in the conductor's face. "I rode all the way in this morning without paying anything—and I was going to ask you to take your change out of that if you'd tumbled!"

ANTE MORTEM

BY BERTON BRALEY

WHEN it comes my time to die,
 When I take the trail no more,
 Do not bury me where I
 Close and deep and still must lie
 As I've never done before.
 I would not be peaceful there,
 Far beneath the sun and air,
 Weighted by the heavy sod
 Whereupon I once had trod.
 This, my friend, is my desire—
 Give me to the cleansing fire
 Which shall make of me a light
 Heap of ashes, fine and white.

Then—I bid you blithely take
 Just that little left of me,
 Throw it to the winds, and shake
 Every tiny portion free,
 So my ashes may be blown
 By the winds I long have known,
 So that I may wander far
 Where my living comrades are,
 Roving in their careless mirth
 Back and forth across the earth.
 "Dust to dust and clay to clay,"
 Saith the preacher droningly;
 —But I want my dust to be
 Dust upon the broad highway!
 Friend, remember this my cry
 When it comes my time to die!



THE CAMP-FIRE A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS ~ ~ ~



THE novelette in the very first number of ADVENTURE (November, 1910) was "The Crook and the Doctor." All the readers who have been with us from the beginning will remember it. Later there were several more stories by Dr. Cochrane about *Dan*, or "*Sled*," *Wheeler*, a crook in Blackwell's Island prison where the Doctor in the stories was running the medical end of things—a crook of remarkable and forceful personality, high in a vague and mysterious secret order claiming members in all walks of life.

NOW for the facts back of those stories and the one in this issue. Dr. Cochrane himself is the Dr. Corbin of the stories. There really was a *Dan Wheeler*, though of course he bore—or bears—another name. The secret order, unbelievable as it seems, does exist according to Dr. Cochrane and to a third man unknown to him or me until he 'phoned me and wrote Dr. Cochrane that he had chanced on some very queer things that, in the light of these stories, became exceedingly interesting.

This third man has enlisted a fourth, and for over a year has been working on his clues in spare time. I am not in his confidence, but he 'phoned recently that he was making progress. His only incentive seems to be the interest of the thing. I imagine that from the very nature of such an order it would be almost impossible to run it to earth.

Once I asked Dr. Cochrane about it. He replied as follows:

That "Secret Order" without name? You forget, I ween, that those temporarily of the Outer Circle were not put hep to the name, purpose or reality of its problematic existence. They—one of which I was whom—were temporarily under the orders and protection of they knew not what. That protection I certainly enjoyed, in the year 1899, and that is all I know. What I guess I would fain retain.

It is a hard fact that with "*Sled's*" help I got the Head Matron bounced. It is a harder fact—to explain—that in one and the same year I had convincing evidence that I was looked upon with favor

by the retiring and the incoming wardens, who were of opposing political camps and widely different standards of morals. Likewise it is literally true that I had but to tell any crook in the pen to get on the operating-table, and he got—without academic distinctions of pathological indications—to have his head amputated if I saw fit. Selah!

And something from another letter:

I wish I knew if *Sled Wheeler* is alive—I want to see him again. But I fear he has croaked, or the stories would have brought me news of him. That man certainly *did* exist—and then some! And I very much desire to know what he is at. One thing is certain: there is more fun on the Other Side if he has passed over. I didn't put all of him in the stories, by much. He lived a purely objective existence and to be alive was synonymous with doing something or somebody all the time.

Dr. Cochrane is a Vermonter, a Harvard man, class of '93, with a medical degree from the University of Virginia; an athlete and a practising physician. There will be more to tell the Camp-Fire about him as the other *Sled Wheeler* stories appear in the magazine.

REFERRING to "The Wizards" in this issue, Frank Blighton writes:

Actual communication with a steamship was attained by accident, as set forth in the story, while tuning up a land station. The chapter called "The Hypothetical Hypotenuse" sets this out at length, but I have fictionalized somewhat here as well, in order to increase the interest in the scientific problem which the boys faced. Some of the theories regarding the analogies between light, X-rays and Hertzian rays were not so well established then as now; in fact, the differentiation that occurs in the story has been made only in recent years of scientific research.

IF YOU can read the following letter to me and the next one written direct to you and not want to extend the right hand of friendship to Frank Goewey Jones, then you have no guts. It is not a pretty expression, but it's what I mean. It will be to your credit also if you get a lumpy feeling in your throat.

If you are a business man, you will be particularly interested in these letters, but if you're any kind of man at all you will recognize another man when you see him and will feel and act accordingly.

Mr. Jones talks straight from the shoulder. I never met him or heard of him till he began sending stories to this office. Until these two letters reached me I had never dreamed that he was serving a sentence. But I like the way he talks, and I hope we'll have more stories from him.

IONIA, MICH., Christmas, 1913.

DEAR MR. HOFFMAN:

Before I write the material for the Camp-Fire I want to express my sincere appreciation to you for the kindly reception of my story, "Pure Gall." This is the first manuscript I ever have sold. I need not tell you that following two years and a half of hard work at writing, the initial acceptance is epochal. Strangely, and very happily for me, the day after I received your letter I had a telegram that *McClure's* had bought one of my stories and wanted a series like it. All this good news coming to me on the eve of Christmas makes this holiday time the merriest I ever have spent.

AND now the paradox: I am in prison. For two years and a half I have been separated from my wife and boy. In such circumstances most men are impervious to the spirit of Christmas. Therefore I feel that an actual miracle has been wrought for me. Think of it! Two years and a half of hard work at writing without a single acceptance; then, on the eve of Christmas, comes the word of the first success! The glad news mailed to my little family is at once the only Christmas present I could make them and the best I possibly could send. You understand now how deep is the appreciation I feel for your great kindness.

Very sincerely yours,
FRANK GOEWELY JONES

TO THE CAMP-FIRE

I WAS born at Chicago, August 19, 1874. Ten years later my parents removed to Crystal Lake, Illinois. There I attended the excellent public schools. I completed the high-school course when sixteen. I then matriculated in the Law Department of the University of Michigan; I graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Laws in 1893. The next year I returned to college for a post-graduate course, and received the degree of Master of Laws in 1894. Immediately after Commencement I entered the office of a Chicago lawyer as a clerk. Not until 1895 did I hang out my own shingle. After a very moderate success in practise I had the temerity to marry in 1896.

My professional career closed July 9, 1898. Through one of my clients I was given the opportunity to enter a lucrative manufacturing business. I first was secretary-treasurer of the company, and two years later became its president. The business outgrew its Chicago plant and was removed to Muskegon, Michigan, where new factory buildings had been built for it. I went to Muskegon with my

family and in a short time became identified with the civic activities of my new home community. I was elected a bank director, president of the Chamber of Commerce, president of the Manufacturers' Association, president of the company owning and operating the largest hotel in Muskegon. Besides all this I was a director in various social and business clubs of the city.

BECAUSE of serious financial reverses suffered by my associate in the manufacturing business, our company was heavily involved in debt. The panic of 1907 caught us with this big load on our shoulders. Like many other men before me, I lacked the good sense to fail when I was ruined. I thought we could work out. We issued a false statement of our assets and liabilities and borrowed money on it. I thought we were lucky when the lie tided us over. Then for three years I fought a losing battle. The first criminal act made succeeding ones necessary if exposure were to be avoided.

At last, in desperation, I forged some commercial paper. Luck, which I then thought good, stayed with us. The forgeries were not discovered. The business began to make money. We seemed in a fair way to pay out. A year of apparently growing prosperity made me feel confident that we should extricate ourselves from our difficulties.

Suddenly came the inevitable *contretemps*. The forgeries were discovered. My partner and I were arrested. I made no defense and was sentenced to the Michigan State Reformatory for a term of four years, in 1911. My associate fought his case, but after a two years' delay was found guilty by a jury. I am shaking hands with myself yet that I had the good sense to save that two years in my own case.

HERE I am. My term expires in 1915. The State Board of Pardons has recommended to the Governor that I be paroled now. The warden, the trial judge, and the prosecuting attorney join in this recommendation. What the outcome will be I do not know. Of course, I shall be very glad if my sentence is commuted, but I shall keep on plugging away if I am required to stay another year and a half.

I lost all I had in the failure of my business. More than money, I lost the honorable place in society that had been mine. My one purpose since the smash has been to win it back. Public sentiment has never been harsh toward me at any time. My old friends have stood by me with a loyalty that makes a lump rise in my throat when I think of their continued faith.

AS SOON as I entered prison I set about the task of rehabilitation. Warden Otis Fuller gave me permission to have paper and pencils in my cell. August 1, 1911, at half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, after my day's work was over, I began writing my first story.

I was as green as greenhorns are made. The work I turned out and pronounced good I know now was awful stuff. I was quickly disillusioned. Then began the hard fight to learn how to write. Every day, almost every spare minute, I practised. For two years I worked alone, groping. At last I was blessed with the help of a trained critic. My faults were pointed out to me. I improved rapidly. Now I have sold you and *McClure's* a story. I am crude

yet, but I shall keep on working until I learn how to write aright.

That is all there is to my biography.

THE only adventures I have had are the numberless narrow escapes from discovery of my wrongdoing. I do not enjoy recalling those close shaves. Out of my own experiences grew "Pure Gall," which you have just accepted. I never met the particular crisis described in that story, but my business life hung on as slender a thread as did that of Conroy & Day—not only once; a hundred times. If ever a man has known the sensations of living under the sword of Damocles, I have known them. I can best describe the experience by saying that it was like playing a game of poker three years long, with the limit the sky.

I SHOULD like my readers to know that I realize one thing: I am green at writing—very, very green. I shall receive as a personal favor any criticisms sent to me. I want to learn, and I'm willing to bust my suspenders trying. There is nothing that would help so much as having my readers tell me what they like or dislike in my stories.

Very sincerely yours,
FRANK GOEWY JONES

HERE, again, is the brief explanation of our identification-cards. They are offered free of charge to any of you. All we ask is that you comply carefully with the simple directions as they appear below in italics:

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag of aluminum, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to give the two names and addresses in full when applying.

OF THE various mysteries we of the Camp-Fire are running down, that of General Sir Hector Macdonald, K. C. B., D. S. O., is slowest in yielding clues to the truth. Therefore let's get to work on it now. As most of you know, he rose from the ranks in the British army, became involved in a private scandal and, so it was announced to the world, committed suicide

in Paris. Then arose the persistent rumor that his death had been "faked," that the coffin taken home to Scotland had not contained his body, and that under some other name he was very much alive. Some claim he was General Kuroki of the Japanese Army. Some that he was a prominent figure in the late Balkan wars. Others that he is giving China valuable military service. Others that he was killed in Brazil.

Doubtless some among you know the truth or have an inkling of it. If he is really still alive there are reasons for respecting his wish to conceal his identity. But if he is dead let's have the truth. If, in a new life, he has served bravely and honorably it is well that it should be known and placed to his credit.

AS I HAVE said, so far the clues are very slight and contradictory. One man writes that he himself saw "Fighting Mac" far west of the Great Wall of China, in command of a bunch of "foreign devils" whom the Chinese called the "Lost Legion." But he will not let me use his name or give the details of his letter. I am following up some threads, but at present the following letters give the little that is available.

To begin with, two letters from No. C 96, a sea captain now on the Pacific Coast. In the first there is only this about Macdonald:

I have known it for a fact that Hector Macdonald is in China and very busy, and several officers with him. His relations ought to know where he is and they state the same thing.

Here is something from his second letter:

As regards Sir Hector Macdonald: I am given to understand by ones who have served under him that he was the original General Kuroki of the Japanese Army, and there is no mistake about it. Pictures taken of him in a group by war correspondents will prove the facts.

I know that a large corporation has been in touch with him, to take hold of the Mexican trouble and fight it out; also Doctor — has volunteered to serve with him. As to his present whereabouts I must keep secret for his benefit, but he will be heard of in the near future.

THE following incident neither the writer nor myself believes has any bearing whatever on Macdonald, but is given as a 1,000,000 to 1 shot:

Some time after the World's Fair at St. Louis I read (*not in print*) of a Scotchman whose name had

been Mac Something-or-other but who dropped the Mac prefix and went by the Something-or-other. He was subdued with difficulty while on a fighting *vino* drunk. The commanding officer thought at first it would be impossible to do other than kill him. The man never regained the full possession of his mental faculties, but lingered on for some time, repeating incessantly in Tagalog, "*Hindiacopatai, hindiacopatai*" ("I'm not dead yet, I'm not dead yet!")—No. C 224.

HERE are pieces out of three letters from Dadie A. Mack Gaffney, T. T., written from Portland, Oregon, and near Kalama, Washington, and dealing with a number of things, among them Macdonald:

This Major Davis killed at Ilheos, Brazil, was supposed to have been Hector Macdonald, and plenty of Englishmen who met him while he was in Bahia will take an oath to that.

Letter number two:

ABOUT Hector Macdonald: it was sworn by a dozen Britishers who claimed to know Macdonald that the Major Davis killed at Ilheos on that crazy raid of Magali's was none other than Hector himself.

You know Magali and eight others, American and British, left New York for Bahia and then shipped to Ilheos, where they expected to find an army waiting for them. They found nothing, held up the town, and started out for Belle Horizonte, where they expected to find an army of 20,000 waiting for them. They were surrounded thirty miles out and Davis killed, and the rest imprisoned for two years.

I know that most of Magali's crew who cared to remain in Brazil are well cared for, and several Bahianos of good repute will swear that it was Macdonald who was to lead the army that never had a chance to materialize.

The third letter:

I have been watching your magazine for more news of Hector Macdonald, who was supposed to have been Kuroki during the Jap-Russ. War.

Several months before Liao Yang happened I was in Shanghai roaming around. One day to my surprise I saw a man who had deserted my old company talking to my old company commander. Needless to say I was astonished, for I was sure that if those two ever met it was a certainty the deserter would be arrested. But here they were talking like two old comrades. As the deserter left the Captain I arranged to bump into him. He did not seem pleased to meet me. Not knowing what was up, I passed on.

THAT night, in the old Tongku Coffee House, the deserter sat down at a table where I was licking up a few, hoping to meet some one from home. This fellow seemed glad enough to see me now, but I was peeved at his thinking I would "turn up" a comrade, so I "bawled him out."

He was supposed to be an Armenian refugee

brought to the States by some Boston missionaries. At least that was the history he gave us in the company. I knew he was an accomplished linguist, as we used to be in the same squad. Also I was the only man in the outfit who treated him as a white man, as most of the men seemed to think he had a strain of negro blood.

He was sorry, he told me, that he had to turn me down as he did, so he explained that he was engaged on a job that compelled secrecy. To make it short he told me he was born in Massachusetts, of Russian-Polish parents. He said our old company commander was on a board of strategy composed of American and British officers who were assisting the Japs, and that he was in the Jap service also. He was discharged from our Army for this service and he produced discharges to prove it. He told me Kuroki was a real man, but a figure so far as directing the forces went. That was why no foreign newsgatherers would ever get to the front.

From him I first heard the legend of Hector Macdonald.

YOU can print this much, but of the following I ask you to keep secret the names of people mentioned.

—, of the — U. S. Infantry, was on leave of absence in the Winter of 190—, visiting Manchuria. He with —, now —, — Infantry, and —, now retired and head of the — Secret Service, were military observers with the Jap Army during the War. You can trace the movements of these last two, but no one can locate —. Where was he?

He is a — on the —. Where is he now? I'll bet he ain't very far from — in —. Look him up and see if you can locate him. Was he or Macdonald the head of Kuroki's staff? *¿Quien sabe?* But if Major Davis who was killed near Ilheos, Brazil, was Macdonald, only —, this deserter and two British officers can tell of the inside affairs of the Jap-Russ. War.

Investigate and it will astonish you where it leads to. Also a discussion in your Camp-Fire might start something.

THE last of this, especially as printed here, is vague, to say the least. But there seems to be "something doing," and I confess to a lively curiosity. I have two other clues to it, but in so far as it bears on matters which the U. S. Government naturally prefers kept secret, Americans, and apparently Englishmen too (since the two Governments were working hand in hand), are bound to leave it a closed incident.

The mystery of General Sir Hector Macdonald seems only to lead us into other mysteries. Which adds zest to the seeking. It looks like a long trail, but are we going to give it up on that account? Hardly. Who among you can add fresh evidence?

ARTHUR SULLIVAN HOFFMAN.

WANTED

—MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the Camp-Fire, free of charge, to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. N.B.—Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.

WANT to make one more trip to Peru for the sole purpose of working one of the many placer deposits I noticed while on survey in that country in 1904-7. It is not my intention to search for Inca treasure nor to explore ruins, for that has been worked to death; but I have discovered a placer deposit of gold-bearing gravel that I have reason to believe is immensely rich.

I want a party of three or four good, honest, congenial fellows; I prefer men who are thoroughly familiar with placer mining, and the mining game in general. No booze fighters or gamblers. Men who can defray their own expenses and be depended on. Will leave for Peru about the first of July, 1914.—Address No. W 227.

DURING my superintendency of a South American plantation I heard through an Indian tales of a ruined city and temples, and hidden wealth. Later I persuaded my Cholo to lead me through mountain fastnesses to the lost city. Among the ruins I found evidence that treasure was concealed beneath an altar. But it was impossible for me to reach it, and so the treasure waits for the gods to give to whomever they favor. I also found in close-by river beds rich auriferous deposits.

I have decided to charter a sailing-craft and with a party of reliable and courageous men sail to a point opposite those ruins and remove the treasures from the temples. The men must be strong and intellectual—no boozers—willing to do what they are told and able to keep their mouths shut. If a fool—or a detective—should babble, the party could be trailed by forces recruited by unprincipled

capital, who would not hesitate to annihilate us when once they know we have the treasure. The men must rest content with my plain statement; they will learn the rest when on the high seas. As my finances are badly crippled, all men except three I know personally will pay a deposit to assure me that they will be ready to sail when I say so, as delays are dangerous and all craft watched. I have worked too hard and risked too much to take any chances at this time.—Address No. W 68, Box 67, Bisbee, Arizona.

WANTED, a partner to go into the Yaqui River country of old Mexico after gold. One who can furnish his own equipment and knows something of the country and language. Am twenty-six, understand horses, firearms and roughing it, and have ridden in the desert and mountains. Lived several years in Southern California.—Address L. W. FERNALD, 1011 18th St., Bakersfield, Cal.

I HAVE some information that I think is good. I haven't any cash now, but if some one with enough money to get us both to South Africa will come in, I'll lay odds that he will get ten times as much as he put up. There is a good chance to get a hundred times as much, but there is also a chance to lose. I would like to have a young fellow about twenty-one years old. I am twenty-one and think that if we are near the same age it would be better.—Address M. F. WEISER, 317 S. Oakley, Kansas City, Mo.

Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.

LOST

TRAILS

NOTE.—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal Star to give additional publication in their "Missing Relatives Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

COMRADES on full-rigged ship *Culzean*, between Dundee, Rio Janeiro, Bombay and Calcutta, 1875 to 1879; or gunboat *Bulldog*. Also Troop K, 6th U. S. Cav., Apache Campaigns 1881 to 1886.—Address GEORGE E. BROWNE-WICKHAM, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

BEN BLACK, alias "Big Ben." Last seen in Montana, with Sloss cattle outfit, '98. Six feet three, very dark.—Address PETE BATTLE, 1130 15th St., Birmingham, Ala.

CHARLIE ROBERTSON. My son. Last heard from in Vancouver, B. C., intending to leave for Yakima, Wash. Mulatto, brown hair, 145 pounds, birthmark on one cheek; likely to be found around hotels.—Address MRS. MARY BOYCE, 411 South Cumberland St., Jackson, Tenn.

CARL SABIN (my brother), and Clayton Steele, late of the U. S. N. Last heard of at Caliente, Nevada, on their way to Old Mexico.—Address WILBUR SABIN, R. F. D. 1, Box 30, Shelley, Idaho.

HELEN BRECKENRIDGE ARHENS. Last heard of in Toronto, April, 1907. Will she or any one knowing her whereabouts please let me hear from them?—Address MRS. M. M. SPRIVEY, 357 Cobb St., Athens, Ga.

GEORGE A. HERON of U. S. S. *Vermont*. Last heard of in Boston. Address your old pal ERICH TIETZE, care Haas, 28 West 38th Street, New York.

J. J. MCINTYRE of Brandon, Man., and late of Fargo, N. D. My brother. If he will communicate with me or his home he will hear of something of value.—Address FRANK J. MCINTYRE, 603 Fraser Ave., Edmonton, Alta.

CAPT. LORENZ LASSEN. News wanted.—Address L. W. STEVENSON, Box 26, Cape Charles, Va.

CHARLEY REITMEIER, last traced to Dawson, 1906. Any one knowing fate or whereabouts please notify his brother.—Address JOS. REITMEIER, care ADVENTURE.

MARTIN SERVIN, CAESAR VAN AUKEER, or "DUTCH" SEIGEL, please write.—Address MIKE DREBLIN, Gen. Del., or McCoy Hotel, El Paso, Tex.

LEIGHTON EWELL, somewhere in the southwest. Write brother.—Address ERIC EWELL, Selma, Cal.

JOHN F. MADDOX, last seen Mendocino County, Calif., Spring of 1913. Supposedly headed for Seattle.—Address R. L. HASTINGS, Box 726, Billings, Mont.

CHARLES LOVETT SEAMAN. Left Weymouth, N. S., about 40 years ago, and sailing out of Boston. Brother would like to hear from him, living or dead.—Address J. LOVETT, 6 Cogswell Avenue, Bradford, Mass.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CLINT HOFFMAN, who stowed away with me on the iron bark *Cloisburn* from Glasgow to Cape Town, and afterward shipped with me on barkentine from Cape Town to Philadelphia, via Maceo (where I was shot and stabbed in hand fight), and Pernambuco. I was then called Mike Reynolds. Please write.—Address MAX REYNOLDS, White Rats Club, 227 West 46th Street, New York City.

JACK BONHAM. Born Hastings, Eng. Band of Royal Sussex 1900-6. To Sherbrooke, P. Q., Canada, March, 1906. Last heard from Aug., 1906, Sherbrooke. Natural musician. Word wanted by mother.—Address MRS. JEAN BONHAM, care ADVENTURE.

ANTHONY BROOMS or his pal, who were trapping around Stony Creek, Northern Alberta, in Winter 1909-10. Write.—Address **J. CHATVAIRE**, 301½ Columbus Ave., San Francisco, Cal.

MEN who served with U. S. forces during China Relief Expedition of 1900.—Address **C. A. LOMAS**, American Service School, 80 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

GEORGE A. KEENEY, alias White Rivers, supposed to be out West. Cook, 48 years old; bad scar over left eye, also tongue split. Mother dead. Brice dying. Nice fortune waiting him here. Sister.—Address **MRS. E. L. SELLERS**, R. R. 36, 201 London Ave., Peoria, Ill.

WILLIAM BURNS, of Dubuque, Iowa, who was in Eldorado in 1904-06. About 23, white, tailor. Write to "Buster," of Co. B.—Address **HARRY R. BROWN**, 905 South State St., Chicago, Ill.

GEORGE HAVELOCK ("HAL") WILLING FOY. Two hundred dollars reward for information leading to restoration to friends. Irishman, last heard of in Honolulu, October, 1912. Thought to have gone later to Mexico or Peru. Consuls have been notified. 28; 5 ft. 8½ in.; fresh complexion; brown hair and eyes; well built, military figure.—Address his father, **REV. EDWARD A. FOY**, The Rectory, Lisnadill, Armagh, Ireland.

ARTHUR R. COCKRILL, my brother, 20; last heard from near Wichita, Kan.—Address **MRS. L. D. CURREY**, 111 S. Elliott Pl., Brooklyn, N. Y.

WILLIAM C. LYONS, years ago in California, about Redding.—Address **ANNA E. LYONS**, 1967 Biltmore St., Washington, D. C., or **HENRY C. MEIGS**, Ft. Gibson, Okla.

RELATIVES of Charles Livingston Wilson, born Kentucky. Brothers James and John, and two sisters both married to ministers; one was Canadie Wilson.—Address **CHARLES C. WILSON**, Patricia Hotel, Vancouver, B. C.

PAUL RAY, last seen in Oklahoma. 5 ft. 6 in., weighs 150, scar on left cheek.—Address **MILTON GOLD-SMITH**, U. S. S. West Virginia, Bremerton, Wash.

JOE TRAVIS, probably at newspaper or advertising work somewhere between Suez and Yokohama.—Address **DR. C. J. MINER**, B. P. O. E. 894, Galesburg, Ill.

"DART" SEWELL, of Eaton, 1906. Last heard of in Canada.—Address **RICHARD ADDISON**, Columbia Theater, Muncie, Ind.

ERSKINE ("ERK") HESS. 29, short and stocky. Light hair and gray eyes. Hotel steward. Last seen in New York. May be in U. S. Navy.—Address **R. M. HERNER**, Box 201, Bradenton, Florida.

EDWARD MOLERES, Raceland Plantation, Louisiana, 1901-2; also clerk in New Orleans.—Address **E. CORMIER**, La Corona Hotel, 453-465 Guy St., Montreal.

E. B. STEWART of Milwaukee and New Orleans.—Address **L. T. 220**.

"BABE" WILLIAMS, of Oakland (1910) and Los Angeles. Address **H. A. HAMMILL**, Heighton, Sask., Can.

GEORGE R. DUNCAN, formerly of Kremlin, Oklahoma, later of Colorado.—Address **J. B. DUNCAN**, Grace Hotel, 414 Market St., St. Louis, Mo.

"FIGHTING JACK" BONHAM. Los Angeles, May, 1911. If this is the Jack Bonham advertised for in another item in this column please write his mother.—Address **MRS. JEAN BONHAM**, care ADVENTURE.

ED. MACKIE, Bellevue Service, El Paso. Write.—Address **MISS EVA CLIFTON**, Gen'l Del., Texarkana, Tex.

VAN WAGONER, known as Dutch. Last heard of in Shanghai.—Address **L. T. 225**.

BOB W. GILLESPIE, N. A. Blackham, E. H. Stout, Edw. Powers and Max Davidman.—Address **GUY E. NEFF**, care ADVENTURE.

EGYPTIAN SERVICE MEDAL. Found San Antonio, August, 1913, with ribbon and Expert Rifleman badge of U. S. Army. Silver medal with disc pendant and 3 bars—"Kirbekan," "The Nile 1884-85," "El-Teb-Tamaai." One side disc: "Egypt" and bas-relief figure of Sphinx. Other side: "Victoria Regina et Imperatrix" and bas-relief of Queen Victoria. Around edge: "Private ———, Camel Corps,

Egypt, R. S. G." Present holder will return to owner on his filling out blank that stands here for his name.—Address **DONALD FRANCIS MCGREW**, care ADVENTURE.

R. MACDONALD, in 18th British Hussars, 4th and 7th U. S. Cav. Also E. L. Davis, formerly of Winnipeg.—Address **VAL J. MACKENNA**, Gen. Del., Wahpeton, N. Dak.

FRANK CRIEGER, **C. J. CALHOUN**, **WILLIAM C. SHAW**, **W. F. ROGERS**. Please address A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

NO. 56, No. 73, No. 76, No. W 93, No. W 107, No. W 140, No. W 150, No. 153, No. W 183, No. W 184, No. W 189, No. W 212, No. W 215, No. C 108, No. C 205, please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us don't reach you.—Address **A. S. HOFFMAN**, care ADVENTURE.

THE following have been inquired for in "Lost Trails." They can get name of inquirer from this magazine.

A.—D.—Bardsley, John W. ("Red"); Brooks, Al. H., rancher, Canada; Brooks, Geo. and Tom; Christensen, A.G., South America; Chadwick, B. W. (Bert); Connelly, Jim, Co. I, 9th U. S. I.; Cory, Willis (Red, Kentucky, or Wins Golden), Philippines, Tex., Calif.; Crane, Roland Henry; Crawford, John and Lee; Crown, Chas. A.; Cunningham, Patrick, Michael and James; Culp, Simon P.; Dalziel, James, bark *Socotra*; Day, Stanley; Dean, George, whaling bark *Canton*; Deckard, Ed (Wessel); Deetz, Clyde C.; Dwight, L. H., Hospital Corps, Philippines, 1900.

E.—L.—Embree, Clarence; Engesser, Conrad A.; Francis, Henry, *Trenton*, Samoa; Foley, Sergt. Jas.; Gallup, J. W. S., Los Angeles; Gibney, Jimmie; Gollrick, Charles, once U. S. N. H. C.; Gardiner, Jack, B. S. A. P.; Gregg-Anderson, Billy, wireless operator; Groves, F. V.; Griffiths, Jack, B. S. A. P.; Gulliver, Iquique, '98; Haddock, John, Sr., of Dawson; Harries, Julian, B. S. A. P.; Harson, Wm.; Haskinson, Gordon (English); Hamilton, Chas.; Hellmann, H. H.; Hiatt, Claud, brother of; Hinds, Mike; Irvin, Howard, on *Mailas*, '11; Jasper, Key West, Mexico; Jay, Wilburn, Madero Foreign Legion; Jessup, Theodore V.; Johnson, Walter M.; Kale, Iver C., alias Jesse Allen or Bob Fife; Kelley, C. P., of Yuma; Knudsen, Fred, *Red Rock, Balmoral, Willis A. Holden*; Kufek, Hans, B. S. A. P.; Landrum, J. W., Kentucky; Lane, Martin, U. S. A., Klondike; Law, Gordon; Lee, John R.; Le Vonde, William.

M.—Q.—McDaniels, Taylor, Hospital Corps, Philippines; Macdonald, John Avay; McDonald, Joe L., McElvain, William; McGonigal, Ed., U. S. S. *Lancaster*; MacNeill, Jack V. ("Robbie"), artist; McKinzie, J. W. formerly U. S. N.; McKee, Grady S.; Martel, Dick, Hermosillo; Megie, Benjamin F.; Meissner, Pete, Grapery; Mentusha, Big; Meyrick, Lieut. Archibald, Prince of Wales's Light Horse, Boer War; Miller, Frank; Montgomery, John; Moorehead, Will Z., orchid hunter; Moriarty, John F., Madero Foreign Legion; Morine, Capt. C. D.; Morris, "Lee" or P. M.; Morris, Thomas George Nixon; Moulder, Joe; Neale, Chas.; Wm., and Ernest; O'Connor, A. S., B. S. A. P.; O'Neil, Captain Billy; Parker, Capt. F. T.; Pavilla, Jack, of "Jacky Wonders."

R.—S.—Raansvaal, Isaac, Co. I, 9th U. S. I.; Rae, Clarence, P. I. R.; Raeder, Edward J.; Raymond, Charles Henry, piccolo player; Richardson, Frank Ely; Robertson, Harry G., Customs, Manila; Rogers, Percy, of Manchester; Ross, Bob, B. S. A. P.; Schaeffer, Charlie, Sonora; Scott, Fred, once Pennsylvania newspaper man; Shannon, James; Shannon, Wm.; Shehan, Edward J.; Shepherd, Richard L., Vancouver and Toronto; Sherwood, F. A.; Smiley, Leroy; Smith, F. E., *Olympia* at Manila; Smith, Capt. R. J., Central America; Smith, Oscar, Australian; Smith, William Chalmers, Mexico; Stearns, Herman; Stephenson, Robert Fern, Texas; Stewart, W. J. (Bill); Sutherland, Charlie, once Bechuanaland Police; Sweidert, "Dutchy" (phonetic spelling).

T.—Z.—Tice, Wm. G.; Urita; Van Damme, Jimmie, B. S. A. P.; Weiner, Oscar; Wiley, Miles G.; Willbern, Walter P.

MISCELLANEOUS.—Bonavita, Capt. Jack, friends of; Brook, Glen, heirs of; Boer comrades of John Bussanich at Ladysmith and along Tugela, also John Murray, Tom Morrrows, James McTigh, Jack Ryan; Capt. of Co. B., Tia Juana; Nesbitt, Capt., V. C., and other comrades of M. M. Marsden; Tressider, Percy, comrades of; "Lintic" O'Sea, "El Rayo," comrades of; Van Leue, Capt. F. E., comrades of; Hospital Corps, 23rd U. S. Infantry, 40th U. S. V.; any one 4th Texas Vol. Infantry in Spanish War; boys in 11th Infantry, 1890-1902; old shipmates British bark *Lyderhorn*; S. P. surveying-party at Verdun, Nev.; Percy M. DuBois, R. R. Plum, Joe Enscoe, Chas. Carruthers, Lester Selig, Thos. L. Hogan, Andy Osborne—once of *Evening Star*; comrades in Co. E, 20th U. S. Infantry, Troop E, 7th U. S. Cavalry; T. S. M. Cottrell, Corp. McEwen, Cooper, Sergt. Dacombe, of Troop B., M. M. P.



The Trail Ahead

TO MAKE any magazine twice as good as it was before is a hard task. And the better it was, the harder it is. But that's what we're doing with ADVENTURE. This number in your hands we consider the best we have ever published. Now watch for the next issue—July, out June 3d. Here are some of the things you will find in it:

GULBAZ AND THE GAME

A Complete Novelette

By Talbot Mundy

If you have ever read another story like this, let us know. "Kim" came nearest to it, but there is no *Yasmini* in "Kim." Do you remember her, the alluring woman of mystery in Talbot Mundy's "A Soldier and a Gentleman"? Here we have her again, equally alluring, equally mysterious. And *Gulbaz* himself. And the Secret Service of India—no other organization in the world is like it. No detective story like this has ever before been written. Seven letters spell it—M-Y-S-T-E-R-Y.

COME-ON CHARLEY

By Thomas Addison

Write this name—*Come-On Charley*—down in your memory till June 3d. After that you won't have to make any effort to remember it. This is the first of a series of stories. Before that series has got well under way "Come-On Charley" will be a catchword from coast to coast. I'm so anxious for you to meet him that I can hardly wait for the July number to reach your hands. If you're interested in what publicity and reputation can accomplish, you'll take an extra interest in these stories. Or if you've had a legacy of \$10,000 that people thought was \$2,000,000. They call him "Come-On," but—

DATO VATAO, FAN

A Philippine Baseball Story

By Dwight L. Loughborough

Dato Vatoo didn't play himself, but no fan ever had the baseball disease any worse than he did, and Heaven knows there never was another game pulled off like the one he stirred up in the Philippine jungle. When it came to actual playing it was *Jack Spencer*, the civilian scout you've met before, who did most of it. But *Dato Vatoo* did the *John J. McGraw* act—with variations. And it's the variations that make your hair stand up on end.

A TRIUMPH OF MEDIEVALISM

By George Shepherd

In this number in your hand you've read in "A Case of Reversion" about *Ivanoff*, the ignorant Russian who went to Hawaii, where his inborn love of horses—his ancestors were *Yomud Turkomans*—burst forth with remarkable results. The July story will give you a subsequent adventure of his that will quicken your pulses and perhaps make you feel a bit choky.

THE CHELSEA VASE

A Complete Novelette

By Hugh Pendexter

Here is a straightaway detective story woven around a murder mystery that will keep you guessing clear up to the last page. *Ezra Butterworth*, head of the Bureau of Abnormal Litigation, finds in this case a problem to strain his powers to the uttermost.

A BLAMED AMATEUR

A Fight Story

By Gordon McCreagh

Once the author fought his way to a championship in Burma—an amateur who had some special reasons for fighting. I've seen the medal and it sure is a wonder! There isn't any medal in this story, but there's a good scrap in it and a very unexpected ending.

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